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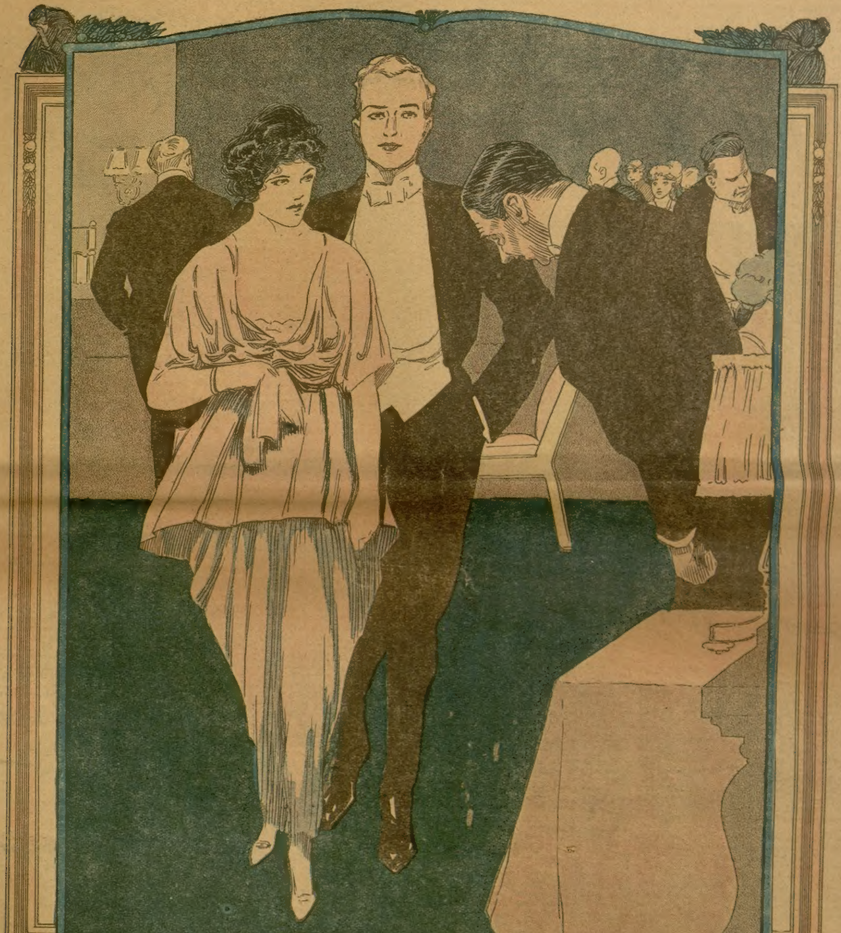

## Her Strange Confession

(See Next Page)

# Her Strange Confession

## -:- Or, -:-

# Making Good

### By Constance Beatrice Willard

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## CHAPTER I.

THERE is nothing that appeals more to the average American man than to be needed by the woman he loves, and when Richard Kurston realized that Rose Vandeville wanted his help, he was the happiest man in New York City. Scarcely believing his own eyes, he reread the note written in her characteristic hand, upon the rich, creamy paper she affected:

> "I know I am imposing upon our friendship, but there is no one else in all the world upon whom I can call in this emergency. If you are the true friend I think you are, be at the Barracks tomorrow, Tuesday night, January fourth. It is a great service I am going to ask of you. Can I count upon you? I am sure I can, for I believe I recognize your faithfulness to friendship. I am in dire need, or I would not send this, and will hope that you can come. Do not communicate with me until then, and I will expect you there at ten-thirty. ROSE."

"My Wild Irish Rose!" he whispered to himself, as he so often did.

Beautiful Rose Vandeville, daughter of one of the richest men in the country! Rose in dire need! It seemed impossible, but however it might be, Richard Kurston, reporter for the Advocate, was at her service.

From the first instant he had seen her, while covering one of the numerous entertainments given by the charity workers connected with the Barracks, their settlement house, he had loved her with all his heart, but he had never hoped to win more than the warm friendship he had finally gained from her.

"Am I dopy?" he asked himself, staring at the note. Then he compressed his lips and resolved that no matter what she wanted of him he would do it.

The Barracks was kept open night and day, and much good was accomplished by it, Rose Vandeville being the leading spirit. Many were her charities, for her father gave her a free hand in dispensing the wealth which flowed into his possession, and none ever appealed to her in vain. Altho a leader in her social set, those who knew her best realized that her strongest interests were centered about this settlement house.

Once or twice the thought assailed Kurston that perhaps it was something connected with the charitable work which caused her to write as she did, but then he would recall the personal tone and be reassured.

The hours dragged until the appointed time, and in order to be punctual he took a late lunch at a restaurant in the vicinity of the Barracks. As he ate his sandwich and drank his coffee he reviewed his acquaintance with Rose Vandeville, and almost wished that they had never met.

"What can a poor devil like myself expect?" he asked himself wearily. "Why, I don't earn enough in a year to pay for a week of her charities, let alone any other expenses."

Then he shook himself. These were not the proper thoughts to indulge in when she needed him, and he glanced at his watch, compared it with the clock at the end of the restaurant, and finally left the room to walk past the grim old settlement house several times before entering. As he did so the idea came to him, as it had before, that it was a marvel why so many institutions of a like nature were made to resemble so closely a prison.

A final glance at his watch proved that the time set by Miss Vandeville was close at hand, and he ran lightly up the stone steps and entered the never-locked door.

One of the girls who were always on hand to answer the door came forward, calling him by name, for he was well known at the Barracks now, coming often in a private capacity when not sent by his paper in a professional one.

"Miss Vandeville said that you were to wait for her in here," the girl said pleasantly, motioning him into a small room reserved for the use of the lady patroness of the house, and Kurston entered and looked impatiently about him, but the room was empty.

However, he did not have long to wait, for within five minutes the door was thrown open, and Rose Vandeville came into the room, dressed in a dark, tailor-made costume, and instantly everything changed for the young man. She was not only a beautiful woman, but one whose face charmed aside from its physical loveliness. She was a regal-appearing creature, with black hair, exquisitely fine, and eyes that matched in color. Her complexion, clear and fine-pored, showed the healthy red beneath the olive skin. About 28, she was past her girlish bloom, but possessed the more mature charms which come of years of study and association with the best of everything. A sweet, tender, noble soul looked out from her dark eyes, and a sympathetic nature was betrayed in the rich, full tones of her low voice.

She entered, both hands held out, her face aglow with a warm welcome.

"I do appreciate this," she said simply, and Richard Kurston, bending over her hands, renewed his vow to serve her, no matter what she required of him.

"You need me?" he asked as simply as she had spoken.

"So very much. I know I can depend on you."

"To the uttermost," and he gave her hands a reassuring pressure.

"I am asking a strange service," the woman said slowly, "and yet it is one that is needed very much."

"Tell me what it is. What do you want me to do?" and Kurston smiled down at her.

"I want you to marry me—now, tonight."

"Marry you?" Kurston cried, wondering if he were dreaming.

"Yes. Have I asked too much?"

The man felt his head whirl, but he knew that his dearest wish was being gratified. Still he must let her know his own feelings, so he cried hoarsely:

"You ought to know there is nothing that I would desire more, for I love you, Rose, love you desperately!"

"I had hoped so," she returned quietly, "or I could not have asked this."

"Will our being married help you any?"

"Yes, but you must marry me without asking my reason. Will you?"

"Yes."

A strange expression came into the eyes of this woman at whose feet society had laid its best gifts, but she lowered her lids and Kurston did not catch it. There was something beyond love, something approaching more nearly adoration, but all she said was:

"I will try to make you a good wife, dear," and he pressed his lips to her hand. Then she laid her other hand on his shoulder and whispered: "Poor, dear boy! The clergyman is here. Will you marry me now?"

"Yes," he again returned, not being able to say more, for his heart was too full for mere words.

Everything seemed like a dream. He managed to make the suitable reply, placed the ring the clergyman handed him upon Rose's left hand, listened to the parting benediction, and then found himself alone with his wife.

"Mrs. Kurston! It does sound strange, Dick, dear," she whispered, and he awoke to the fact that the clergyman had called her that.

"It sounds beautiful to me, darling," he returned.

"I hope you will not hate me for taking it," she returned wistfully, "and now I will tell you why I needed you."

"Nothing could ever make me hate you," he said. How lovely she was with that new, shrinking manner, she who always was so self-reliant!

"You are all alone, without relatives?"

"Entirely so."

"Dick, I can't tell you!" she moaned.

"Let it go for the present," he returned gently. "It makes no difference, anyway."

"Ah, yes, but it does!" she said slowly. "I asked you if you had relatives here because I wanted to know if you could leave the city for an indefinite stay without notice."

"Of course I can, but why?"

"I am facing a serious charge; that is, I am in danger of being accused of a serious crime."

Richard Kurston looked down at her protectingly. She was his wife now, and he would protect her from anything on earth, and he told her so in no uncertain words. Wanly she smiled back at him. Then, laying her hands on his shoulders, she whispered:

"But the crime is a terribly serious one, Dick."

"What?" he asked, not quite realizing how serious she was.

The beautiful woman paused a moment, her lips quivered, then she bent forward and said in a low tone that struck terror into his very soul:

"Murder!"

The man gazed at her in bewilderment, his face whitening, then he gasped:

"But you can easily prove your innocence."

With a despairing gesture his wife shook her head.

"No, dear," she said gently, "I cannot, because you see I am guilty!"

## CHAPTER II.

ON SUNDAY night Stanton Herrick had left his club at a rather early hour, saying to a fellow member as he did so:

"I have a date, and you'd never believe whom it is with." He lurched a little as he spoke.

"Don't want to know," Frank Young returned shortly, for Herrick was not a favorite. Easy-going as many of his acquaintances were, his dissolute life was so openly in disregard of all good taste, to say nothing worse, that those who had the misfortune to know him gave him as wide a berth as possible, and there was talk of his expulsion from his club in the near future.

"Green with envy?" jeered Herrick, in response to Young's rebuff.

"Not exactly," rejoined the other, starting to move away.

Herrick grinned, and then began humming "My Wild Irish Rose," the one air Rose Vandeville's friends held sacred to her, and Young understood what the man was trying to make him think.

"You dirty loafer!" he cried hotly. "Don't come around me or any other friends of the lady you are trying to slander and even suggest that she would descend to notice you, or you'll get your face broken in!" and he half raised his fist.

Then, realizing Herrick's condition, he turned away and did not heed the torrent of abuse the other hurled after him. One of the waiters noticed the altercation and remembered.

This was the last time that Young saw Herrick alive. The man rushed out, hailed a taxicab, and gave his home address.

At ten-thirty he reached his handsome apartment in a structure that housed a number of unmarried men, and seemed fairly sober when the doorman let him in. After the clubman had passed upstairs the doorman went off duty, for he had obtained a night to himself, and contrary to the usual custom, the door was left unguarded.

As he was passing out another taxi came up at a rapid rate, and a lady heavily veiled hastily descended from it and ran lightly up to the door. Just as she laid her hand on the knob a sudden gust of wind blew her veil from her face, the doorman had a brief view of it, and instantly recognized Rose Vandeville, whom he knew well by sight.

Stanton Herrick did not appear at any of his usual haunts on Monday. Tuesday several persons asked about him, but it was not until Wednesday morning that the janitor decided that something must be wrong, when the caretaker, who came twice a week to look after the premises, said that she could not get into Herrick's rooms.

He summoned the doorman, and when the pass key failed, they broke down the door. Inside, lying on the floor, was the body of the murdered man, for murdered he was. Stuck in his lifeless body was a dagger of peculiar workmanship. Medical aid was summoned immediately, but the physician said that Herrick had been killed several days before, probably Sunday night.

When the doorman heard this he remembered the beautiful face he had seen for the moment, but as he had a child who had been changed from a hopeless cripple to a whole being thru the kindly efforts of Miss Vandeville, he kept his own counsel, as did Frank Young.

The papers came out with sensational headlines; many clews were given; the police looked wise, but nothing definite could be discovered.

The detectives placed upon the case found that the keyhole had been stuffed with a rag, which had been jammed in from the outside after the door had been locked. This it was that had prevented the caretaker from gaining entrance with her pass key.

"It's given the murderer several days to make his getaway in," said Bob Prouty, the detective in charge, to his assistant.

The latter nodded.

"Who was it?" he asked.

Prouty pursed up his lips and whistled.

"Ten chances to one it's a woman," suggested the assistant.

"Sure, but which one?" Bob Prouty asked with a sigh, waving his hand over the piles of notes in feminine writing which he and his assistant had taken from the dead man's desk.

"That's where we will make ourselves famous, finding out, eh, Bob?"

"Perhaps, if we don't make fools of ourselves by not finding out, Jim," Prouty answered.

Once more the assistant nodded.

The readers of the Wednesday papers had another sensation aside from that furnished by the murder, for there appeared in all the journals the announcement of the marriage of Rose Vandeville and Richard Kurston.

## CHAPTER III.

RICHARD KURSTON can be forgiven if he recoiled from his bride as the pregnant words, "I cannot, because, you see, I am guilty," fell from her lips. His wife understood, and her face was very sweet as she answered his look of horror with these words:

"Forgive me, Dick, if I have presumed too much upon what I was so sure of, your love for me."

"Rose, oh, my Rose!" the young man cried, catching her in his arms and holding her close to his heart as tho to defend her from all the world. "Darling, what made you do it? If you wanted to have anything settled, why didn't you call upon me?" and he groaned.

"Because I was a self-sufficient woman," Rose replied quietly, and then she continued: "You must take me far away, down into South America, where we can bury ourselves. Come, dear, you will, won't you?" and she leaned toward him, having but the moment before disengaged herself from his arms.

"Rose," the man's voice rung sharp, "who was it?"

Rose Kurston hesitated a moment, then whispered: "Stanton Herrick."

Richard staggered; his hand clutched at his collar as tho it was too tight. His staring eyes sought those of his wife, but found no shame there, and he drew a long breath. It was not any wrong of her own she had been trying to right—of that he was sure. Probably the whelp had attacked her father.

The bride saw what was passing in his mind, for she said in her low, sweet voice:

"No, dear, I had no personal grievance against the man. In fact, I knew him only by sight," and she tried to smile bravely.

"But Herrick is not dead," Richard cried in relief.

"Yes, he is dead, dear, and probably the body will be discovered tomorrow. In fact, I am surprised that it has not been found before," and she shuddered.

Richard Kurston felt like pinching himself, everything seemed so unreal. Before him was the one woman in all the world for him, his wife, and yet confessedly guilty of the greatest crime under heaven.

"Richard, dearest, I want to tell you something. I have never entertained any feeling toward him or any other man that would lead me to crime. His death is the result of a terrible accident, believe that."

"I know that," he cried eagerly, but his wife held herself beyond his arms while she continued: "I felt, however, that I needed a man's strength, a man's protection, a man's love, to sustain me. I want to get away. Will you take me?" and she lifted her soft eyes, now slowly filling with tears.

The young man slowly shook his head.

"Rose, I don't think it would be best. You see, I'm a reporter, and, next to a gum-shoe man—perhaps even more—, I'm used to looking for motives, for connections between certain events. For you to bury yourself away from the world now might lead to——" His voice broke.

"You want me to stay right here, then?" she asked.

"Just that. Rose, I wish I could have your confidence. Perhaps I don't deserve it, but anyway, all I am is yours as long as we live."

And Rose went straight into his outstretched arms, and as he stroked her hair and murmured broken words of endearment, she showed him by her manner of yielding to his caresses that even if she did not then love him, her heart could be easily won, and he wanted it more than anything else on earth. Her crime did not in his mind in any way defile her. It only made her something for which he must fight every minute of his life, and he was glad he could do something to prove his devotion.

Finally, tho, he held her off at arm's length, and asked simply: "Is there any way this can be traced to you?"

"I do not think there is any probable danger," she returned.

"Then, darling, unless something happens to bring the matter up, let's bury it in the past," he said gently.

"And you are not angry with me for imposing upon you?" she asked, her lips trembling.

"Angry? Sweetheart, I am only too proud to be able to serve you. Just remember that from now on I am right by your side, ready to give up my life for you and the protection of your honor."

He did not rant while saying these words. His voice was low and broken, but it carried strength and courage and showed the real character of the man.

"Dick, you can forgive what I have done?" his wife faltered.

"Rose," and his voice deepened with his emotion until she could scarcely hear it, "I am as certain that you acted as you believed to be right in seeking the man, and that he never came to harm thru any willingness of yours, as I would be if I had been present."

"I am perfectly content," Rose Kurston murmured.

And then, leaning on her husband's arm, the woman of wealth, the society favorite, passed from the settlement house into her new life. Surely, if ever a woman had reason to be proud of her power over the man she married, this one did, and yet there was no pride in her bearing, only a sweet humility.

## CHAPTER IV.

TO THINK of Rose Vandeville, of all girls! Why, I always counted upon being a bridesmaid, at least, and then to think of her cheating us all out of our dues, and being married without a word to any one!" and the speaker pouted in a way she had often been told was distracting.

"It's tough," assented her companion, looking at the tip of his patent leather shoe meditatively.

"Well, Frank, would you have thought it of her?"

"Not yet, Grace," returned Frank Young, slowly.

Usually he had more to say for himself, but his mind kept dwelling on what he had heard Herrick say, and he was distinctly troubled.

"Who is he, anyhow?" Grace Appleton asked.

"Some newspaper fellow, I believe. Not even a special writer—just a common, everyday reporter."

"And married to Rose Vandeville!" Grace gasped.

"Rose Kurston now," Frank Young supplemented.

"Sure thing, Rose is no longer a Vandeville, tho she will always be our 'Wild Irish Rose,'" and she laughed lightly, but was astonished to see her visitor turn deadly pale.

"Don't!" he exclaimed, raising his hand.

Grace Appleton stared at him for a moment, then said coldly: "I believe you were pretty hard hit there."

Young shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps," he admitted.

"Oh, yes, you men all ran after Rose, but I bet it was more for her money than for herself. Now, mind, I don't deny she's a dear, but when a girl has as much money as Rose, men will get crushed about her and never stop to ask themselves why."

"Money is worth a crush," Young said gloomily.

"That's why I'm left in 'maiden meditation fancy free,'" Grace gibed, but Frank Young knew there was a sore feeling behind her light words, for Grace Appleton, altho a charming girl, was well known to have absolutely nothing.

"Cheer up!" he said in as light a tone as hers. "You have not yet fallen into the sere and yellow."

"No?" Grace asked, with her distracting pout.

"Hardly. I say, Gracie, isn't it a shame we are both poor? If you were as rich as Rose, we could marry each other," and Young laughed lightly.

"It is a pity," Grace returned, her eyes sparkling. "If I were rich and we married, there is one question I would never have to ask."

"What's that?"

"Why did he marry me? You see I'd know—for my money."

The two laughed merrily. They were merely good friends, and enjoyed an evening of nonsense once in a while. Having given vent to their high spirits, they naturally returned to the subject of their friend's marriage.

"Where do you suppose she met him?" Young asked.

"Probably at the Barracks. You know she has a ferocious crush on settlement work. Many's the day she's dragged little me into it, and how I hate it all!" And Grace puckered up her little face and blew away the subject.

"Why do you think it was there?" Young asked.

"Why, reporters used to flock there, and where else would Rose Vandeville meet a reporter?"

"I see."

"Then I think I've met this fellow. I wonder if he's a great big chap, light and rather determined-looking."

"I really don't know."

"I rushed straight off to the house this morning when I read the news, but the servants said that Mrs. Kurston would not be at home for two weeks."

"Had the name down pat, eh?"

"Seemed to."

"I say, Grace, did you read of the end old Herrick came to?"

Grace nodded.

"Know him?"

"I've seen him once or twice, but never spoke to him in my life."

"I see. I wonder if any of the girls did," Young said slowly, feeling his way.

"Rose might," Grace answered, and again wondered at the pallor on the face of her visitor. "What's up—sick?" she asked.

"No, it's just awfully hot in here," he said, feeling as if a hand were clutching at his throat. "Why'd you say that Rose might?"

"Because she was always begging for that settlement. He'd been glad to give just for a chance to speak to Rose Vandeville, wouldn't he?"

"Oh, he was a bad enough actor any way you put it," Young muttered, then added aggressively: "I'd have thought that Rose Vandeville could have given all the money herself, and not know it."

"She could, but she believed it good for us all to contribute to the cause. She wants us all to make good. Mercy me! but she did work us girls to death! I wonder if Mrs. Kurston will be as busy helping the poor."

"Why not? She's begun well, helping a very poor young man," and he laughed bitterly.

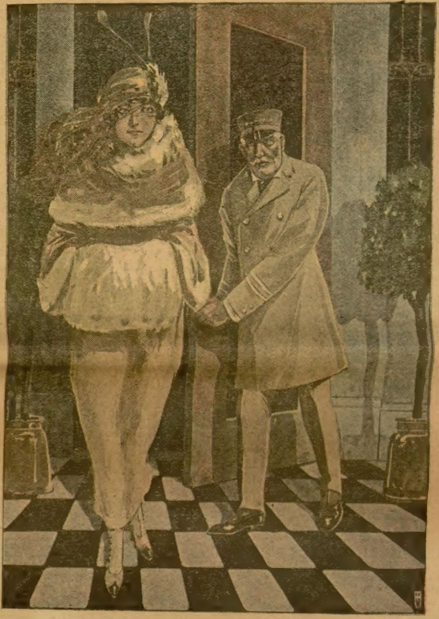
"Frankie, you were hard hit," Grace said decidedly, giving the young man a sharp look.

"Not yet, Gracie, but I do wonder what she married that fellow for," and his eyebrows knit in a heavy frown.

All of Rose Kurston's friends were asking the same question that Wednesday night, but Rose was far away from them all on her honeymoon, away from them and whatever might be overshadowing her in the great city.

## CHAPTER V.

ISN'T she too sweet for anything?" Frank Young heard in his ear, and, turning, he faced Grace Appleton, who herself looked like some angelic creature in her gown of pale blue and cream.



*The doorman instantly recognized Rose.*

"I suppose so," Young said slowly. He hated himself because he could not forget Herrick's words and manner the last time he had seen him.

"Suppose! Frank Young, did any of your folks come from Scotland? You're a regular Harry Lauder for never giving a direct answer. Rose looks like a dream!"

Grace looked admiringly toward the end of the room, where Rose Kurston stood by the side of the man she had married two weeks before, stately, smiling, wearing her magnificent Parisian robe of white satin with a regal air. Across the front of the high-waisted gown was draped a necklace of diamonds, each one a gem, while in her black hair quivered a tiara fashioned of delicate filigree work in the form of roses, the center of each being a solitaire. About her neck was a single string of the white fire-stones. Her glowing brunette beauty could stand the violent contrast, and her eyes flashed brighter than her jewels.

By her side stood Richard Kurston, erect, magnificent in his young manhood, perfectly tailored, a fitting husband for any woman. Altho the center of attraction for Rose's many friends who crowded to this reception given by her father in honor of his only child's marriage, the young reporter bore himself without the slightest self-consciousness. He had faced men and women of all kinds too often in a professional capacity to allow their stares and half-concealed comments to worry him, but he was not happy, for the shadow of his wife's confession lay between them. No matter how charming she was, fear reigned in his heart. He dreaded each moment what the next might bring forth.

Many came up to congratulate the young couple, and some were cordial, others frankly curious.

While Frank Young and Grace were watching the bride and groom, a man approached them, one as dark as Rose herself, and somewhat shorter than she. He bowed over her hand, and said smilingly:

"My dear Miss Vandeville—I beg pardon, Mrs. Kurston—your action has broken many hearts."

Rose knew that Bradley Graves had not forgotten her new name. She knew that it was but one of the many ways he would seek to annoy her.

"Hearts easily broken are soon mended," she said lightly, and then added: "Allow me to introduce Mr. Kurston. Richard, dear, one of my old friends, Mr. Graves."

Richard felt his fair face flushing under the critical gaze of the man so much beneath him in height, but he grasped the hand held out to him, and said heartily:

"I am enjoying meeting Mrs. Kurston's friends tonight."

Graves took in the young giant from the tips of his patent leathers to his smoothly brushed hair, then drawled:

"Yes, Mrs. Kurston's friends are all strangers to you, are they not?"

The manner was even more offensive than the words, but the tone was perfectly level. Rose's face flushed, but she held her temper well in hand, and without waiting for Richard's reply, she answered for him:

"My friends will find that they are under obligations to me for bringing a man of Mr. Kurston's caliber into our rather ordinary set." Then she half turned her back upon the man to greet another friend.

The snub was evident, altho administered with so much diplomacy that no one could resent it, but Grace clutched Young's arm, whispering:

"Rose has said something to make Bradley awfully mad. He's not going to forgive her for slipping thru his hands."

"You don't think he ever had the slightest show, do you?" asked Young in amazement.

"You all think you had, don't you?" Grace asked, with her pretty pout.

"Do you?" Young parried, calling forth a reproachful:

"Harry Lauder!"

As Graves moved slowly away, his eyes encountered those of a woman who would have been conspicuous anywhere, and he hastened to her side. As she saw him coming, she drew aside her skirts to make room for him on the divan upon which she was sitting, and to better show off her sumptuous figure, the outlines of which were not hidden by her clinging black satin gown. In her gleaming red hair were woven ropes of great pearls, and the same fell from her neck nearly to her feet.

The Livingstone pearls had figured in one of the most sensational divorce trials in the country, and if Lola Livingstone had not belonged to one of the best and oldest families of the city, not even long-suffering society would have continued to receive her. As the divorced wife of Harold Livingstone, she had no prestige, but as the daughter of old Professor Milbrand, scientist and philanthropist, she was tolerated at such houses as the one she was now in, altho she and Rose had never been much more than mere acquaintances. Had Rose had a home or church wedding, Lola Livingstone would not have been invited. Under the circumstances, however, all who moved in the same circle as the bride had been bidden to meet the man whose name she now bore.

Mrs. Livingstone smiled up at Graves with her languorous hazel eyes, that now showed decidedly green, murmuring:

"And did she turn him down now that she has a new plaything?"

Graves flushed hotly.

"Don't try to deny it, Bradley," laughed the widow. "Your expressive face tells the story. But never mind, once the novelty has worn off, she will be ready to shake him, and then the clever man can step into the shoes left vacant."

"Cut it out!" growled the man in a tone he would never have dared to use toward his hostess, but Mrs. Livingstone did not appear to mind, and only laughed carelessly, saying abruptly as the laugh ended:

"Well, the man's a pretty fellow."

"Rose Vandeville didn't marry him for his looks."

"No? Then what for?"

It was the question all were asking. Standing before them, replying to their remarks with admirable self-possession, Richard Kurston did not exactly answer this query. Handsome he certainly was, without doubt a gentleman, but there was nothing about him to indicate to them why a woman of Rose Vandeville's position and wealth should have been carried off her feet to such an extent as to marry in secrecy an unknown, obscure, poverty-stricken young fellow, who was only a reporter on an evening paper. Society never believes in love.

Back and forth they all surged, their voices breaking in upon the music furnished by the best orchestra in the city. In the dining-room servants were busy ministering to the wants of the inner man, and the pop of champagne corks was almost incessant.

Conspicuous among the guests was the giver of this reception, Kirby Vandeville, the trust magnate. He went among them all, his face beaming, the picture of easy and good-natured gullibility, and yet those who sought to hand him anything resembling a gold brick found themselves facing a stone wall in which there was not the slightest crevice. Kirby Vandeville had not attained his millions by any lucky fluke, but by sheer audacity, a determined seizing of opportunities almost before they presented themselves, and a profiting from the example of others who had not succeeded.

Few there were among his guests that evening who did not know and appreciate these qualities, and so the amazement was all the greater that he displayed so much apparent pleasure over his daughter's marriage.

"Can he be some foreign prince in disguise?" a few asked.

Others told each other: "The man owns some undeveloped mines that will make the old fellow's pile look like a one-story shop beside the Singer building."

Still others decided: "He's blackmailed the old man into giving him the girl to keep still. These reporters are the very devil for such things."

And yet it was Grace who discovered the real reason, as she and Young were watching the bridal couple from a convenient alcove.

Richard had turned aside to answer his father-in-law, who had come up and asked him a question, and for the moment Rose stood alone, looking at her husband, her back turned toward her guests. Her face was toward the couple in the alcove, and they could see her distinctly. As Rose looked at Richard, an expression came into her eyes of such perfect adoration that Grace, clutching Young's arm, suddenly whispered:

"That's the answer! Rose married him because she loves him!" And Young, looking, saw that she was right.

He drew a long breath, then said chokingly: "When I see a light in a woman's

(Continued on Page 9.)

# The Sword of Phiops

## :-: Or, :-:

# A Detective's Problem

## By WILDER ANTHONY

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### CHAPTER II.

"THAT'S the thing," Howard Denton declared impressively, "that has set Kotchana so keen on my trail. He wants it as few men ever desired anything in this life, and he means to get it if he can. It is the thing which may eventually enable us to trap him, gentlemen."

For a little the two stern-faced men who sat on the other side of the table in the explorer's study said nothing. Both seemed to be digesting what they had just heard, and for some minutes there was no sound in the room save the sputter of the log fire in the grate and the soughing of the wind in the trees outside. Then Adam Wolfert cleared his throat.

"You're sure," he asked, "that this ancient weapon is the lure which made him single you out in the first place? There is something more behind it all than the mere desire to suppress what you know of this Asiatic business?"

"There is," Captain Denton answered positively, "altho I did not feel sure of it until very recently. Since that night a week ago, however, when you frustrated his first attack against me I have been learning things. This house has been secretly entered and searched three times, altho I have managed to keep out of trouble personally. Kotchana is looking for something, Wolfert; that something is this sword."

"Why are you so sure of this?"

"Because of what I know of the weapon itself. That old sword, gentlemen, originally belonged to the great King Phiops II., who ruled over all of Egypt during the Sixth Dynasty, or about 2600 B. C. It is probably the oldest relic of its kind in existence. I heard of it first years ago in Thibet, and I spent a good many years searching for it. How I eventually dug it up out of a hidden tomb in the mountains of El Khargeh would make good telling; but it's of no importance to you. The point is merely that until I found the sword it was commonly supposed to be lost; but now that it is known to be in my possession, Kara Kotchana means to have it."

"Why?" Inspector Morton leaned forward a little eagerly as he voiced the question. "Why should an old rusty tool like that make Kotchana lose his sleep?"

The explorer smiled oddly as he deliberately chose a cigar from the humidor at his elbow.

"Because," he explained slowly, when the cigar was drawing nicely, "the 'sword of Phiops' has a history, my friend. If I'm guessing right, and I think I am, Kotchana wants it not so much on his own account as on account of those who comprise his following. You both know, better perhaps than I, that his tools are mostly Hindus, Thugs and worshipers of the goddess Kali, who—a Hindu legend says—lived in the flesh a century or two before Phiops became king. The Thugs believe that Kali was the original owner of the sword, and they look upon it as a holy relic which should be touched by no man save their chief, and they think that its return to them will make them as powerful as they were in the days before civilization scattered them across the face of the earth. At present, so far as we know, Kotchana is their chief. Hence his determination to get the sword. It will serve to increase tenfold his grip on the murderous crew which does his bloody work for him."

"Ah!" Inspector Morton gave vent to a little exclamation as he settled back into his seat, while his eyes, like those of his two companions, traveled to the table and centered on the ancient scimitar which lay there.

"It looks commonplace enough," Wolfert mused, half to himself, as he extended a long arm and grasped the hilt of the curved blade. "Barring the jewels in the hilt, the thing has no intrinsic value, altho its associations make it priceless. We must keep it safe, Denton. If Kotchana really wants it as badly as you think, it may yet be the means of our coming up with him."

"And if it is that," Morton burst out, "that old rusty blade should be guarded as the most precious jewel man ever owned. In Heaven's name, Wolfert, how long is this business going to last? How long must it be before we can run that fiend into his burrow? The man is a perfect cat—he eludes us as easily as tho we were all blind."

"He has so far, Morton," Adam Wolfert admitted grimly, "altho the luck can't always stay on his side. Some day the net will tighten, and when it does I promise you that he shall not slip thru its meshes. But you must give me time, Morton—you must give me time!" He stopped speaking and for many minutes his dreamy half-shut eyes seemed to be probing far, far into the future.

Howard Denton was the first to break the silence.

"What will be your next move?" he asked, finally. "We can't sit still in our rooms and wait for the man to finish us. We've all already had escapes so narrow that the thought of them fairly chills my blood, and I'm not unused to danger. Surely, there is something we can do to hasten the arrest of this human devil?"

Wolfert shook himself together abruptly. The dreamy expression left his eyes, and once more he was the quick, forceful detective, whose long training and almost superhuman reasoning power made him a fit opponent for the greatest of all criminals.

"There is a way," he declared confidently, "and we shall find it. I've never said the man could not be beaten. The best of them make slips at times, and, supremely confident in his own wonderful skill and luck, Kara Kotchana will continue his campaign against society until he makes the one little mistake that will enable me to spread my net.

"Something tells me that this time is not far off, gentlemen; but we must be patient in the meantime. Remember we have an ally in the slave-girl. Who knows when she will visit me again? Thru her we should be able to learn the exact location of Kotchana's latest hiding-place, and the knowledge will give us the start we need. You, Denton, must be particularly careful, and as you value your life, don't let Kotchana get this sword. It is the connecting link in the chain, and thru it we may yet trace him to his lair."

"I understand," the explorer answered quietly, "and you may rely on me to do my best. I go armed constantly, and my servants are men used to living in the rough corners of the globe. That sword cost me a good deal of hardship, and the man who takes it from me will pay for it in full."

It was late afternoon three days later when Adam Wolfert received his second warning from the pretty Circassian whom Kotchana had chosen as his unwilling companion in his war of murder. The detective was writing at his desk, when he straightened up suddenly and looked toward the door upon which a soft knock had just sounded. For an instant he sat motionless, then he noiselessly raised his lean body out of his chair and darted like a shadow across the room to the door. It required hardly more than a second for him silently to slide back the well-oiled bolt and return to his chair, from which vantage point he gave the visitor permission to enter. As the door swung inward his right hand dropped into the side pocket of his office jacket and nestled lovingly around the butt of a revolver.

Much more confidently than on her previous visit, Zari stepped into the room and swung the door to behind her, while Wolfert eyed her in silence. As on her former visit the slave-girl was swathed from the top of her head to the tips of her small toes in a long dark cloak and hood, which she clutched together at the breast with her left hand, while her right was lost in the folds of the cloth. Her beautiful olive-tinted face was slightly flushed, and she panted a little as tho from haste, but in the main she was far calmer than when she came before. Wolfert, the moment he saw her, loosened his grip on his revolver, and stood up with a smile of welcome. She had appeared sooner than he expected—when the knock first sounded on the door he thought that the intruder might be some follower of Kotchana's come to murder him—and he was keenly eager to question her.

"Sit down, Zari," he invited. "You have nothing to fear here. We're all indebted to you for your last warning. You've come here for something. What is it?"

"I must be quick," the slave-girl burst out, paying no heed to the chair he pushed forward, and speaking with that pretty musical accent which reminded the detective of a gurgling brook. "Even now he may have discovered my absence, altho he said he should be gone until late. He means to kill you all as he has already killed hundreds who have stood in his way. Even now it may be on its way to you, that terrible monster of the air that I, Zari, have seen with my own eyes. It is his newest plaything, and when he showed it to me up there on the roof he laughed that cruel laugh of his as he spoke your name. You must fly, I tell you! Fly! Fly!"

She broke off and gazed at the detective beseechingly, her hands clasped in front of her, her dusky hair, from which the hood had slipped, tumbling about her ears in pretty confusion. At that instant, as upon the other occasion when he had seen her, Adam Wolfert was delightfully conscious of the fact that she was one of the most beautiful creatures he had ever looked at, far too young and beautiful to be the plaything of a brute like Kotchana.

"Fly from what, Zari?" he asked, smiling at her. "The last time your master and I met it was he who fled. Come, tell me how he escaped that night at Captain Denton's."

"I know not," she answered. "How should I know, monsieur? I know only that he returned that night in a terrible rage, and that he has been plotting and scheming against you ever since. If he even guessed that I had warned you he would chop me into little bits. But I could not stand these murders—I had to do something."

"Why do you go back at all, Zari? Tell me where I can find Kotchana, and I will put you in a place of safety before I go to put him where he can do no more harm."

"No, no, no!" Zari buried her face in her hands and began to rock back and forth in a frenzy of terror. "I dare not," she sobbed. "If I told you where he is it would mean only your death and mine and the deaths of countless others. I tell you the master can easily destroy all the people in this great beautiful city. I dare not! Oh, I dare not!"

"But if you will you can aid me to destroy him," Wolfert argued, when she paused for breath. "No harm can come to you, Zari. Once I know just what Kotchana is up to I will be able to block his moves. But you must not come here again—it is too risky. Get me on the telephone and tell me——"

"I must go," she cried, whirling toward the door. "He will return at nightfall, and I must be there or he will suspect. I will try to warn you again, monsieur, but I am afraid. May Allah guide and protect us! Remember the monster from the sky!" With a last appealing look from her wonderful eyes she snatched open the door and vanished beyond it.

Wolfert made no attempt to stop her. For an instant of lightning thought he stared at the gaping doorway, then he stepped to the telephone and spoke sharply to some one at the other end of the wire. When he had done this he shut and bolted the door again and threw himself into a chair, where he filled and lighted his pipe, which he began to smoke furiously.

Half an hour later there was another knock at the door and the detective opened it to admit one of his assistants.

"Well, Foley?" he demanded eagerly.

"I followed the girl as you ordered, sir," Foley answered, "and she took me to a big gloomy house on Cherry street. She entered it with a pass key, just as if the place belonged to her, so I didn't wait to see anything more before I came back to report."

"Cherry street, eh," Wolfert muttered, stroking his chin thoughtfully. "So that's it. With his money he can afford to pay rent in the swell residential districts as well as in the slums, and people are far less suspicious there. But how about his Hindus? We must find them next. You watch that house, Foley, night and day from now on, and trail whoever leaves it. Have Mains help you. By the way, what is the number?"

"Number forty-five, sir." Foley departed to begin his vigil, while his chief recharged his pipe and fell to pacing the floor in the restless habit he had when thinking deeply.

It was shortly after midnight when a man in the working clothes of a telephone lineman and carrying a canvas tool bag on his shoulder walked briskly along Cherry street. At that hour most of the residents were in bed, and the long rows of houses on either side were nearly all dark and silent, altho a few lighted windows broke the monotony of the deserted street. The lineman turned in at the entrance of number forty-one and rang the bell.

A few minutes later the door was opened by a stout, red-cheeked man in pajamas and bathrobe, who seemed to be waiting for him.

"By Gad, Wolfert!" this gentleman remarked, with a grin. "You've a beastly hour for making a call. You're dressed for the part, too." He chuckled plethorically.

"It's the early bird, you know, Mr. Standish," Wolfert smiled at him, "and there are times in my business when night is a lot better than day. Your living just where you do is certainly luck for me. I hope I haven't put you out any."

"Not at all, not at all!" the fat man declared genially. "I have not forgotten your services the time those pearls were stolen, and I'm always glad to assist. Every one is abed, so we must go quietly."

He led the way up three flights of stairs and thru a little door which opened on the roof. Wolfert put down his bag at the base of a chimney, and glanced up at a series of wires which crossed over the building a few feet above his head. For a few seconds he studied them closely in the gloom, then he opened the bag and took from it a coil of insulated wire and a pair of pincers. Climbing up on the brick base of the chimney, he singled out a wire which disappeared under the eaves of number forty-five, two houses to the left, and looped the exposed ends of the coil he carried around it. After he had dropped to the roof once more, he wound the wire around the chimney so cunningly that it was practically hidden by a ridge in the brickwork and carried the trailing end down thru the door.

In the attic Standish conducted the detective into a vacant room, and watched interestedly while the latter took a small metal contrivance from his bag and placed it on a chair.

"What is that thing?" the owner of the house asked curiously, as Wolfert adjusted the wires.

"A kind of dictaphone," was the answer. "I'm hoping that it will have a very interesting story to tell us within a day or two. I must ask you to keep this room securely locked and to warn your servants against talking. You can trust them, I presume?"

"Yes, absolutely. Besides, they don't know that you are here at all, and this part of the house is visited very little. I opened it up just after you telephoned me this evening. You can depend on me to keep my mouth shut."

About nine o'clock in the morning, after a few hours of refreshing sleep, Adam Wolfert ate a hearty breakfast and plunged into a mass of routine work that kept him busy for most of the day. He was in no hurry to close in on Kotchana. Now that he had him where he could watch him he felt that he could afford to go slowly, and he wanted to be absolutely sure of his ground before he made the final moves which would bring Kotchana into the clutches of the law.

All that day one corner of his mind was busy with what Zari had told him on her last visit. Knowing Kotchana as he did, he felt sure that the slave-girl's reference to a "monster of the air" could mean but one of two things: Either some new and hideous creature that the Turk had imported to help him in his crimes, or an aircraft of some sort. The detective was not sure which it was, but he hoped thru his spies and the dictaphone to gain the information he wished.

It was nearing midnight again when Adam Wolfert and Inspector Morton sat together in the former's office. They had been talking over their plans, and Morton was in the act of taking his leave for the night, when the telephone bell rang shrilly.

"Hello!" Wolfert snatched the receiver from its hook.

"For God's sake hurry here at once, sir!" said an excited voice, which the detective recognized as belonging to Captain Denton's man-servant. "Captain Denton has been nearly killed!"

For a second or two Wolfert stared at the telephone like a man gone mad; then he reached for his hat and turned to his companion.

"Come on, Morton!" he cried, "It's Denton's again!"

Twenty minutes later the two detectives hurried into the vast, gloomy yard which surrounded the explorer's lonely residence, and dashed up the steps of the house to be admitted at the front door by the white-faced English servant who had telephoned them. They found Howard Denton reclining in a huge chair in his study, pale and weak-looking, but alive at least.

"What's happened?" Wolfert demanded, with an inward breath of relief, for he had half expected to find the explorer dead. "Was it Kotchana again?"

Denton nodded weakly. "I assume so," he answered, in a husky whisper, "altho I did not see much. If it hadn't been for Philips there"—he glanced toward the servant—"it would have finished me in another minute." He stopped talking, coughed, and lifted his hand to his throat, which, the detectives now noticed, was horribly bruised and swollen.

"It? What it?" Wolfert turned to Philips as the person most capable of answering his questions. "What attacked Captain Denton?"

"God knows, sir!" the man answered, pulling himself together with a of will. "I spent ten years in the wilderness with Captain Denton, sir, and I saw many strange men and animals there; but I never saw another such creature as I saw tonight in Captain Denton's bedroom. It wasn't a man and it wasn't a beast. It was—it was, just a thing, sir."

"Great Heaven!" Inspector Morton sank into a chair and began to mop his face with a handkerchief. "Will the awful creatures that fiend has at his beck and call never run out? I swear I'm getting so I'm afraid to stay alone even in daylight."

"Sit down, Philips," Wolfert went on quietly, "and try to calm yourself, man. Whatever it was the thing is gone now, and we must rely on you for a description of it. What did it look like?"

"Nothing that I ever saw or heard of, sir," Philips replied, seating himself on the edge of a chair. "Captain Denton had retired a trifle early for him, sir, and I lay down on the couch just outside his door, as has been my custom ever since you gave us that first warning. I had fallen into a light doze, I think, when I was aroused by an odd gurgling, choking sound that seemed to come from Captain Denton's room. I threw open the door and dashed inside, electric torch in one hand and revolver in the other."

"And you saw what?" Wolfert prompted impatiently, when Philips paused. "Describe everything you saw exactly as it struck you at the time."

"I saw, sir," the man wet his lips nervously and went on, "I saw a queer, lumpy, hairy thing hunched astride of Captain Denton as he lay in his bed. It was grayish black, or something very like that, in color, and it had long thin arms which pushed up on the shoulders into knobs or bony lumps. Its hands were buried in the bedclothes at Captain Denton's neck, and it was from him—Captain Denton, sir—that came the noise that wakened me.

"As I ran into the room I shouted, and the thing turned a horrible, ugly face in my direction for a second; then it sprang off the bed and came at me. I fired once, but missed, I guess, for something hit me a heavy blow in the chest, and I went over backward. By the time I could get to my feet again it had vanished thru the window."

"Where were the other servants?" Wolfert answered.

"They sleep in the rear of the house, sir; but when they heard my shot they rushed around to the front. They were too late to do much, of course. The thing had got clean away by that time, and we all tried to bring Captain Denton out of his swoon, for at first we thought him dead. Then I telephoned you, sir."

Wolfert stood up suddenly and began to pace about the room, chewing savagely at the dead cigar in his mouth and muttering to himself, while the others watched him uneasily. Suddenly he turned to Denton.

"The sword!" he exclaimed. "You've still got that locked away, I suppose? This creature, whatever it was, that attacked you didn't get it?"

"Of course not," the explorer said huskily. "The sword is in the safe in the library where I put it after you left here last time."

Wolfert, looking somewhat relieved, considered for a moment.

"Let's look thru the bedroom, Morton," he finally suggested. "We're too late to be of much use, but we may pick up some clew or other. I'm glad the sword is safe—it seems to be the crux of the whole business. I looked up that address I found in Professor Ramsey's room, and it took me to an expert in Egyptian curios whom Kotchana had consulted about the sword. Ramsey, too, was interested in it; he mentions it in one of his monographs."

Having switched on the lights in the explorer's bedroom, Wolfert went directly to the window, which was still half open.

"Humph!" he muttered. "They evidently came prepared; I was wondering how 'the thing,' as Philips calls it, got thru that wire grating." He pointed to where the heavy wire network with which Denton had covered his windows had been cut out of its frame.

"Ah, here is something. As I live, Philips was not so badly rattled after all! He noted the color, at any rate."

They had turned to examine the disordered bed, and as he spoke Adam Wolfert pounced upon a little tuft of coarse iron-gray hair which stuck to the blanket.

"Captain Denton is a very strong man," he murmured, "and in a fight for life the weakest of us will grip hard. What do you make of that, Morton?" He held out the tuft of hair to which a small piece of reddish skin still clung.

"It's pretty hard to say," Inspector Morton confessed, after a close scrutiny of the grisly object. "Except that this hair probably comes from the body of the intruder, I should not care to commit myself. It resembles dog hair, I should say."

"It does," Wolfert dryly admitted, "altho I'll wager it is nothing of the sort."

They found nothing more of especial interest in the bedroom, and they were passing thru the doorway into the library beyond when Wolfert ran forward with a little cry of mixed anger and dismay. Facing them across the room stood the heavy steel safe in which Denton kept his valuables, its door swinging wide and a part of its contents strewn on the floor in front of it; but the sword was not there. When a hasty search had convinced him that the ancient weapon was really gone, Wolfert threw himself down into a chair with a snort of disgust.

"As usual," he muttered, half to himself. "Kotchana has played his trump card first. In spite of our efforts to guard it, he has found and taken the sword. He must have worked on the safe himself, while his creature throttled Denton. I was beginning to hope that the sword would be the eventual means of our cornering him, but now——"

He fell into a silent study of the rifled safe, from which he was finally aroused by Morton.

"It was a neat, clean job," the inspector remarked. "A handful of thermite powder ignited with a magnesium fuse did the trick. The steel melted away under that heat like butter under a hot sun. Kotchana is certainly up to date in his methods—he seems to be prepared for everything."

"Yes," Wolfert admitted, with a grim chuckle, "he's always prepared, Morton; but I wonder if we can't turn a little trick of our own even yet? The night is young, and he doesn't know that we've located his den. Ten to one he is in it right now gloating over the sword, and I'm for attacking him before he can give us the slip. Suppose you go to the telephone and direct your men to surround number forty-five Cherry street, in the way we decided upon this afternoon. It's worth taking a chance, at any rate, and I fancy that even Denton, sore and shaken as he is, will want to accompany us."

It was a little after three o'clock when the two detectives and the explorer—as Wolfert had predicted, Denton would not stay behind—walked silently up the street and turned in at the darkened front of Kotchana's abode. All three were heavily armed, and they knew that somewhere in the shadows behind and around the house a dozen stalwart policemen were waiting for Morton's signal to rush the house in a body. A noise-throttling silence made a tomb of the vestibule as Wolfert gently picked the lock of the heavy door and pushed it inward.

Hearts pounding madly against ribs, almost holding their breath in their efforts to move like shadows, the three men slipped into the house and stood in the deeper darkness of the lower hall. For several minutes they kept motionless, but as no sound broke the deathly quiet, Wolfert moved forward a few steps until his groping hands came in contact with a heavy curtain which seemed to cover an opening of some kind. Very softly he raised this and peered beyond it into what appeared to be a large room, altho it was too dark to be certain. He was just turning to whisper to his companions, when he was frozen into a statue by the sound of a door closing somewhere in the upper hall. Almost instantly there was a loud crash and the sound of shouts, which told the listeners that thru some mistake the police were forcing the rear entrance.

Speed, rather than silence, was what counted now, and Adam Wolfert acted quickly. Drawing his revolver with one hand, he swept aside the curtain with the other, and darted toward the stairway which the flash of his pocket light instantly showed him. Behind him came Morton and the explorer, both eager as hungry hounds to be in at the finish. Bounding up the stairs, all three came to a momentary halt in the middle of a long hall, which, save for the uproar the police were making below, was quiet as a vault. With a muttered imprecation, Wolfert dashed to a second flight of stairs and continued his ascent.

Here at last came signs of life. A door flew open in the top of the house, and a flood of light shot across the head of the stairway just as the three men reached there; then there was a scurry of feet, and Wolfert glimpsed a man's legs for a second before they disappeared at the top of a short ladder that led to the roof. Almost at the same instant there was a loud taunting laugh from above, the light went out as suddenly as it had come, and a pistol cracked sharply twice. Wolfert heard the bullets hum past his head as he raced up the ladder and threw himself against the trapdoor which lay between him and the roof. To his surprise the trap gave way easily, and he sprawled upward onto the flat roof.

As he sprang to his feet and looked around, he became aware of a soft purring sound which seemed to come from beyond a stack of chimneys some three or four yards away; but before he could do more than turn in that direction, he was almost blinded by a flood of white light which struck him squarely in the face. At the same time Kara Kotchana's taunting laugh rose above all other sounds, as if in mockery of the men who tried to capture him, and a great batlike shape sailed up into the air and hung poised some fifty feet above the house.

In the light which seemed to fairly ooze out thru the sides and bottom of this strange aircraft, Adam Wolfert could see three figures in it, altho he had eyes for only one, the tall, thin, repulsive figure of Kotchana, who leaned over the side of the plane and waved the sword of Phiops tauntingly, while his horrible laughter never ceased. For a space of seconds Wolfert watched him in a kind of daze; then he and Inspector Morton both raised their revolvers and fired at the swaying figure. As if in answer to their shots, Kotchana brandished the sword defiantly, and the aeroplane suddenly darted upward, its lights faded, and it was lost in the darkness of the night.

This remarkable story will be concluded in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00 and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

## An Old Adage.

Ten soldiers fighting for their king and country happened to get into a cave on the outskirts of a forest. A few moments later a huge lion roared outside the cave door.

"Hello," said the Englishman to the Irishman, "you go and face the lion, as ye Irish are noted for bravery."

"Go along now," said the Irishman to the Englishman, who was known by the nickname "Stitch," "you must go—a stitch in time saves nine."

* * *

**The Identity of the Uproar.**

"Ah! The chiming of the wedding bells——"

"No. That is the bride's father, who has to pay the bills, wringing his hands."—Judge.

If
Coffee
don't
agree
use
POSTUM
"There's
a
Reason"
Postum Cereal Co., Ltd.
Battle Creek, Mich.

A 17-Jewel Illinois Watch
Our Once-a-Year Offer
At $13.75—Send Only $1

To 10,000 Men Only

Once a year we buy 10,000 of these wonderful Illinois Watches. This 17-Jewel Model, with a 20-year Gold-Filled case.

We offer those watches at $13.75—terms $1 down and a year to pay. Our object is to open up 10,000 new charge accounts.

But we offer only 10,000. If you fail to get one by delay, you will have to wait a year.

How We Profit

This offer, of course, leaves us very slight profit. But we have an enormous Jewelry Department. And we supply two million homes with House Furnishings.

If we get you started—get you to open a charge account here—you will buy here all your life. That is why we offer this Watch bargain. It will last you a lifetime. And every time you look at it, it will remind you that you have an account with us.

Thirty Days' Trial

You know this Watch. The best jewelry concerns all over the country handle and recommend it. It is made by the Illinois Watch Co., Springfield, Ill.—one of the greatest and oldest watch concerns in the country.

But we send the Watch on trial. Wear it 30 days. If you are not satisfied with your bargain, send it back.

Send us only $1 when you order. If you don't like the Watch, we will send the dollar back. If you do like it, send us $1 a month. That will give you over a year to pay.

No references required. We will gladly trust you. Express will be prepaid.

But don't wait. These 10,000 watches will go very fast. And this will be your only chance for a year to get such a fine-watch bargain. Send us the coupon now.

Spiegel, May, Stern Co
3709 Wall Street, Chicago

Our Price $13.75
Only $1 Down
A Whole Year to Pay

This watch has a **17-jeweled movement**—it is a perfect timekeeper. The price seems impossible. But we guarantee this watch to have 17 fine jewels, and to be a genuine Illinois watch, exactly the same as sold in jewelry stores.

The case is a **20-Year Gold-Filled Case.** That is, it is warranted for 20 years. It is open-face and a beauty. The back is handsomely engraved. It has a screw back and bezel, so it is positively dust-proof.

The watch is **guaranteed for 25 years.** We send with this watch this guarantee certificate. Think of that—only $13.75 for almost a lifetime of perfect watch service. The watch is a **perfect timekeeper.** No better timekeepers were ever made than the 17-jeweled Illinois. Every man who knows watches knows this.

If you want to sell this watch back to us, after 30 days' use, we will return every cent that you pay on it.

SPIEGEL, MAY, STERN CO. (188)
3709 Wall Street, Chicago

I enclose first payment of $1, for which send, express paid, the 17-jewel Illinois Watch No. K4F709 described in your advertisement. If I keep it I will pay $1 each month until $13.75 has been paid. If I return it within the 30-day trial period you are to send me back my $1.

*Name*..........

*Postoffice*..........

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JEWELRY CATALOG FREE. It contains everything that is new in watches, diamonds and jewelry—all sold on our easy credit plan. Just drop us a postal and it will be mailed you free. But don't fail to use the coupon and send us $1, as this wonderful watch offer will not be made again for a year.

# Serpent and Dove

## Or, The Heiress of Hedstone Hall

### By T. C. Harbaugh

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## CHAPTER IX.

### A STUNNING BLOW.

STRICKEN into silence by the terrible words of Nicholas Burke in the library of Hedstone Hall, Lucille staggered toward the open door. Her uncle murdered, and by Mona? Impossible! The trembling figure on the carpet at his feet, the wan white face and the beautiful yet sightless eyes seemed to paralyze her organs of speech.

"He is not, cannot be dead!" at last gasped the terrified girl.

"Look at him." There was no mercy in the tones that answered her.

Lucille went forward, and for a moment stared at the pallid face framed by the chair. The Northern doctor was an imperious statue in the center of the room.

"Come!" suddenly exclaimed Lucille, and she raised Mona and encircled her pliant waist with her arm.

The blind girl leaned toward her friend shivering. There was an appeal for help in the brilliant orbs that saw not.

"You did not do it, love, no, no!" whispered Lucille. "You loved him too well for that."

"My God!"

The two women went silently up the staircase. Lucille felt the impress of a cold cheek on her own. Not until she had taken Mona to her own room did she speak again.

"What took you to the library, dear?" she essayed.

"Intuition," was the low reply. "I felt that something was there, some specter which I could not see, but which I could feel."

"And you found him—dead?"

"His face was cold, and I knew it was not sleep."

"It was a sudden stroke," again ventured Lucille.

Mona was silent for a second.

"But who came out of the room after I had entered?" cried the blind girl, suddenly starting forward.

"You heard some one?"

"Some one with catlike tread. It was like one walking on velvet, so soft was the sound; but you know, Lucille, that my ears long ago took the place of my eyes."

"Yes, yes!"

"When I lost that sound I went over to the master. Then it was that I found him cold."

Lucille drew back and looked at her companion.

"I heard that man," continued Mona. "I heard his every word. They ring in my ears yet. He commanded you to depart, taking with you your 'poor blind tool.' "

"His infamous language, Mona."

"But you do not believe? You——"

"Let this tell you that I do not believe," and with this Lucille bent over the blind one and touched her forehead with warm, impulsive lips.

The old house had grown still. The very silence was portentous. It seemed as if the invisible had placed upon it the everlasting seal of death.

Lucille went to the window and looked out upon the grounds. A phaeton was coming up the drive. It stopped in front of the house and a little man got out.

"Doctor Dredge! He must have been sent for," she thought.

The doctor of Ashboro came up the steps and vanished. He was in the house ere Lucille turned away.

"Remain here, Mona," she said to her companion. "I shall not be long gone."

With resolution written on every lineament of her features, the heiress of Hedstone Hall went down the corridor, and then descended the stairs. Without pausing she opened the library door and entered. Two men started at her appearance, and she looked into the faces of both doctors. Leo Dredge bowed stiffly.

"This is a shock, miss," said he with a cold, professional air. "Mr. Dalray is dead."

The girl who had halted in the middle of the floor did not move.

Nicholas Burke lifted the night glass from the table and held it between him and the lamp. He had not so much as objected to Lucille's return. In fact, he was concentrating his attention upon the chalice.

All at once a look of victory sprang up in the girl's eyes. No power could have held back the words that leaped from her lips.

"You have failed, Doctor Burke!" said she.

He set the night glass down and turned almost savagely upon her.

"I am now mistress of Hedstone Hall," she went on before he could catch his breath. "As such I command you to leave the house!"

He seemed to snarl like a beaten wolf.

"Not so fast, miss," said he. "When you shall have complied with the mandates of the dead you may speak, not before."

What did he mean? What did this man know that she did not?

"The revelation must come sooner or later," he went on, lowering his strident tones a trifle. "I did not intend to make it so soon. The mandate is here. Will you read it?"

He drew from an inner pocket a paper which he unfolded and spread upon the table. The light that fell upon it told Lucille that it was covered with writing, and, summoning all her strength, she went forward and cast her eyes upon the sheet. It seemed to her that the ink was hardly dry upon the document, so fresh it was.

"Read it and know," said Doctor Burke.

Lucille was already reading, her heart in her throat and her lips dry and parched. Every word appeared to sear itself upon her brain as her eye leaped across the lines.

"Know all men," she read, "that in the event that my beloved niece, Lucille, does not become the wife of Doctor Nicholas Burke within forty-eight hours after this paper is presented to her, she not only forfeits the heirship of Hedstone Hall, but shall be driven hence by Nicholas Burke himself, to whom this estate shall fall with power to forever apply it to his own uses. And I command furthermore that in the event of Lucille disobeying this, my mandate, she shall never more cross the threshold of the Hall, but shall go out into the world with my curse resting upon her head. Done this day, June 19th, 187—, by me, Morgan Dalray, and signed of my own free will.

"MORGAN DALRAY,
"of Hedstone Hall."

The breathless girl felt that the eyes of the two doctors were fixed upon her. She did not raise her head until long after she had read the last word.

Her half-bent figure straightened, and she turned slowly upon the pair.

"I shall not ask by what infamous chicanery that paper was obtained!" cried she. "It is enough for me to know that since that serpent entered this dovecote diabolism has been afoot." Her quivering finger had Nicholas Burke for its target. "From my childhood I have always obeyed the wishes of my uncle. The slightest have been commands to me. He gave me a home when I was motherless; I owe him all the happiness I have ever enjoyed. Until now I have never crossed him in anything. He has been to me all these years father and protector. I will not believe that that mandate came from him without malign influence. It was obtained by the basest treachery. Every word on that paper is a horrid lie, enough to wither the brain that invented it! Your wife, Nicholas Burke? Your wife? Lucille of Hedstone Hall? I repudiate that document! I shall not quit the home of my childhood. I shall remain here, for if the dead could speak I would be proclaimed mistress of this plantation, for the living spoke it long ago."

Her voice trailed off into the silences of that death chamber.

She went toward the open door when the echo of her last word had died away. With haughty step and defiant air she strode from the room and moved slowly up the broad stair. She had flung her challenge straight into the face of the Northern doctor.

Passing Mona's chamber, she went to her own, and sank into a chair. There was no more quivering of the white lips. A ruddy flash of resolution had come into her face. Her hands were clinched and her feet were set firmly on the carpet.

"A lie shall not send me out into the world!" she cried, breaking the tense silence. "I will not be driven from this Eden by the machinations of that reptile. I'll fight for my honor, for the home of my girlhood, for Mona, who is as dear to me as life itself, and for the solution of this deep, dark mystery!"

An hour later she opened the door and peered into the hall beyond. There were shadows there, and the winds seemed to sing a disconsolate song without. She flitted down the passage and once more descended the stair.

A sound of wheels on the graveled driveway saluted her strained ears. She opened the front door and looked out. Doctor Dredge's phaeton was turning toward the little town, but two persons now occupied it.

When it was lost among the shadows Lucille turned back and opened the door of the library. The light had been turned low. There was a deathlike pall over all. She took a long breath, and then, entering the room, closed the door behind her.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE SLEUTH COMES BACK.

MORE than an hour passed ere Lucille opened the door of the library which she had entered after the departure of the two doctors. A strange, almost triumphant, look filled her eyes. Scarcely had she stepped into the dimly lighted hall when a footstep sounded on the porch. A light rap reached her ears. She went forward and pulled the heavy door ajar.

The man who greeted her was strange. He stood in the faint moonlight that sifted thru the leaves and eyed her questioningly.

"Miss Lucille?" he questioned in velvet tones.

"I am Lucille."

He threw a glance toward the closed door.

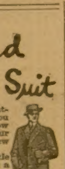
"I am Martin Box," said he. "We have never met before, miss."

"Never to my knowledge," was the reply.

"I have come from Hasketh Seaforth."

The girl's heart seemed to give a great leap in her bosom.

"From Hasketh?" she cried, and then her look sought his face again with a query which she feared to frame into speech.



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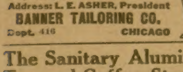

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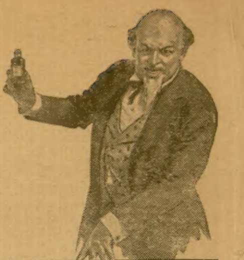

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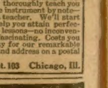

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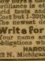

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"You are alone, miss?"

"Quite alone."

"I thought so, after seeing the rig go out of the grounds."

"In here, if you please," and Lucille opened a door across the hall, and led him into a parlor lighted only by the beams of the soft luminary in the sky.

Beating down her eagerness as best she could, she composed herself to hear him. Martin Box dropped into a chair and complacently crossed his legs. He seemed in no haste to begin.

"You say you have come from Hasketh?" prompted Lucille.

"Ah, yes, from Seaforth."

"He sent you, then?"

"I am his detective."

"He went away so strangely, disappeared between two days, that I have been living in mystery ever since."

"But his letter, miss——"

"I got no letter. It was intercepted," interrupted the girl.

"Such things happen," remarked Martin Box with a peculiar smile. "We often deal with such little crimes."

"I consider it an outrageous one, sir."

The man did not speak for a moment.

"Your uncle——"

Lucille raised her hand and checked the remainder of the question.

"Let me answer you in a startling manner," said she, rising. "Come into the library."

Martin Box rose and followed her.

"Yonder is the answer," she went on, halting within the precincts of the library and pointing to the dead. "Morgan Dalray is no longer living."

With a hasty tread the man crossed the carpet and looked into the cold, white face of the old planter.

"When did this happen?" he asked, turning suddenly upon the silent girl.

"This very night."

"And the two men who went off in the phaeton?"

"They were Doctor Burke and Leo Dredge, the village physician."

"They were here when he died, eh?"

"Nicholas Burke was in the house."

"And the other one?"

"He came after the event."

"Summoned?"

"I do not think the news could have reached him in time."

Once more Martin Box lapsed into stillness.

"Who was with your uncle when the end came?" he asked.

"No one, so far as I know. When I entered the room I found Mona here."

"Mona is the blind girl, is she not?"

"Yes, sir."

"What does Mona say?"

"You must be answered by my story of the whole drama," replied Lucille.

"You will oblige me by telling it, miss."

Lucille thereupon narrated the events of the night, which were still very fresh in her mind. He did not interrupt her from first to last. Now and then his gaze wandered to the silent man before them, but it soon came back to Lucille.

"What has become of the night glass?" was the question that followed the narration.

"It is there on the table. No, it is not!" and Lucille's face went white. "It was there when I left the room. I—I——"

"Could the girl have taken it away?"

"She carried off nothing."

A little smile gathered at the lips of Martin Box.

"Pardon me, miss——"

"I am Lucille Van Cleve; my mother was a Dalray."

The detective nodded slightly.

"I don't want to grill you, miss," said he, beginning over, "but who sent for this Doctor Burke."

"My uncle."

"And he came down to arrest the progress of his strange malady?"

"So he says."

"You seem to doubt the honesty of the doctor's declaration."

"I doubt the honesty of every villain."

Lucille's lips closed abruptly behind the sentence.

"What was Doctor Burke's diagnosis of this case?"

"He declared that my uncle was being slowly poisoned."

"By whom?"

"The accusation is a monstrous lie so far as his words go!" cried the heiress of Hedstone Hall. "Hasketh never did it!"

"But your uncle was not favorable to his suit?"

"I am aware that he did not regard it approvingly," confessed the girl. "For all this Hasketh harbored no ill will against him. Why, indeed, should he resort to crime to clear the way?"

To this question Martin Box paid no attention.

"The girl, Mona, is devoted to you, is she not?"

"She would do anything in the world for me."

"Even——"

"No, I don't mean that!" broke in Lucille, catching at the hidden sentence. "Mona would never imbrue her hands in the blood of one who has been a father to her. Besides, she is blind."

"Blind people are wonderfully inventive," remarked Martin Box. "They have passions like the rest of us."

"But Mona——"

"I am accusing no one," said the detective. "Some hand played a dark game here."

"It was all for me and Hedstone Hall!" exclaimed Lucille. "Some hand was at work here before Doctor Burke came. Some one paved the way for that Northern reptile."

"So Seaforth thinks."

"And to think that they would shift the crime upon him!"

"Who does so?"

"Nicholas Burke and, under some malign influence, my uncle accused Hasketh of the villainy."

"What proof did they advance?"

A perceptible shiver ran thru the girl's frame. Should she tell of Hasketh's midnight visits to the Hall, of the startling proof she had had from Mona and from Dan? Why not keep all this as her secret and root it in her heart so firmly that no earthly power could wrench it from her? What good would it do Hasketh to breathe a single word of it?

Martin Box did not let her indecision escape him.

"If you don't care to answer, miss," said he, "we'll let it pass. If there is proof against Seaforth——"

"There is proof of a certain kind," interjected the tortured girl. "But tell me one thing." She sprang forward and her white hands clutched his sleeve. "Why did Hasketh steal away in the dead of night? Why did he fly when no one pursued?"

It seemed for a fleeting moment that her love for Seaforth was turning to bitter hatred. Her voice had changed. Her bosom was rising and falling like little storm-touched waves at sea.

"Perhaps he explained in the letter which you say you never received," coolly remarked the sleuth.

"But he went away in the dark. He left me on a dangerous precipice. He had to try a woman's soul to the utmost. Doesn't he know that heartstrings can be stretched a little too far?"

"All men should know that," was the reply.

"Then, in the name of God, why isn't he here to confront his enemies—and mine?"

With irritating coolness Martin Box took a turn about the room. When he came back to the table he stopped there and stared at something on the cloth. The night glass had left a moist ring where it had stood.

"Miss Van Cleve," he said, suddenly looking up into the face of the immobile girl, "may I ask you to leave me alone in this room?"

"You shall be alone," answered Lucille. "You may call me when you wish to leave the house."

"I shall not trouble to call," he smiled. "You can take your rest without fear of interruption. Good night, miss."

He was still standing at the little table when Lucille glided from the library.

## CHAPTER XI.

## A TOOL THAT FAILED.

SLUMBER was far from Lucille's eyelids when she heard a door below her room open and close. She involuntarily glanced up at the clock. Martin Box had been in the library a full hour. What had kept him there all this time was a mystery. She turned to the window and saw a figure moving down the drive toward the road which led to the town.

The man walked rapidly, and after a little while appeared in sleepy Ashboro. The one hotel which stood in the middle of the place was not an all-night affair. There was no occasion for its doors to remain open from dusk till dawn. True, there was a late train on the solitary railway that ran thru that section, but if an Ashboro passenger arrived on it he had but to knock at the front door, and Boniface would let him in.

Martin Box, being a guest of the little hostelry, did not go thru the ceremony of knocking. He opened the door and went in. The light in the so-called office was dim, and the detective was about to proceed upstairs when he perceived a man in a chair in one corner of the room. This individual raised his head when Martin appeared, but the next moment appeared to have dropped back into slumber.

It was not until Martin, who had taken a cursory glance at the fellow, had disappeared up the creaking stair that he seemed to revive.

"So," said the man to himself, "he's got back, has he?" and he arose.

If he had been waiting for some one, surely it had been for Martin.

At length he drew off his shoes and stood in his stockinged feet. There was a litheness about him that suggested a jungle animal; he had a long, keen face closely shaved, and a pair of deep-set eyes were overshadowed by arching

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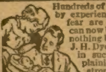

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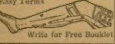

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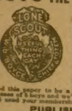

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brows. He went to the stair door with cautious and noiseless tread. His hand lifted and he moved the latch deftly.

Up the stair he went, one step at a time, and found himself in a narrow corridor above. His movements indicated that he was acquainted with the premises, for after a look down the dimness, he made for a door at the end of the passage.

A few steps brought him to this particular portal. He applied one ear to the door and listened. Half a minute later he pushed the door open, for it was not locked, and slipped across the threshold.

The bed in the room which he now faced stood where the moonlight lay. The intruder's eyes found it at once. He stood for some time looking at the couch and seeming to calculate the distance that separated him from it. Up to this time the man had produced no weapon, but now his hand glided underneath his coat and came out clutching a revolver, which he glanced at with an air of confidence.

To all appearances Martin Box was a good sleeper. He never took "business" to bed with him. If he did he would have seen the apparition that had invaded the chamber.

Presently the lank man went over to a heap of discarded raiment which hung on the back of a chair at the foot of the bed. In another moment his deft hand was going thru it with the skill of a night thief. All the time he had an eye for the man who slumbered peacefully, dreamless of what was occurring within a few feet of him.

The fellow suddenly shook his head. Nothing had rewarded his investigation. Baffled tho he was so far, he did not care to give up the search. Having finished the clothes, he moved toward the side of the bed and then——

A pair of eyes were fastened upon him! Not only this, but he was looking into the dark muzzle of a revolver, and behind it was the wide-awake face of Martin Box.

"Don't!" came over the leveled weapon. "It mightn't be good for you."

The prowler, tho he still clutched his own weapon, did not seem to think of it.

"Throw it on the bed," commanded Martin, "and take yon chair, with your face in the moonshine."

Sullenly the man obeyed both commands.

"You don't send in your card first, I see," continued Martin, with grim humor. "You wanted to take me by surprise."

There was the slightest grunt on the other's part.

"I say, Mr. Gump——"

"But I'm not Mr. Gump," was the interruption

"Oh, yes, you're Handy Gump! You couldn't stroll thru perdition without being recognized by every imp there. When did you land, Handy?"

There was the look of protest in the man's eyes, but under Martin's piercing gaze it soon disappeared.

"You came up here to despoil me. You intended to take my life if I discovered you. Come, don't prevaricate. There are more truthful men than you behind the bars."

Martin meanwhile was getting slowly out of bed. His movements were almost imperceptible, but he got out in a short time and came over to the chair.

"I say, Handy, why have you followed your old master down here? Were you to come after so many days?"

"What is it to you?" grumbled Mr. Gump.

"Nothing, perhaps—everything, maybe."

"My old master, eh?"

"Yes, the poison doctor of New York."

"Martin, I swear——"

"Don't! It's bad usage. What's the lay just now, Handy?"

Mr. Gump began to stutter.

"Take your time, and don't injure the Queen's English," grinned Martin. "It's a long time till morning."

All the while the weapon which the detective handled covered the lean face in the chair.

"I see you have disarranged my clothing," Martin proceeded. "Weren't you cocksure of my identity?"

"I—I——"

"There! You are going to stutter again!" cried the sleuth, and the next second he was standing over Handy Gump.

"A truce to badinage!" he went on, his voice rising into sternness. "You are still in the employ of the poison doctor?"

"The poison doctor?"

"Nicholas Burke," prompted Martin. "Now, Handy, I want the truth. I want it or a dead man where you sit."

A pallor swept across the face upon which the ashen moonlight fell.

"Did he send for you?"

"No!" rasped Mr. Gump.

"Then you were to come down here after so many days."

"Yes."

"And you've seen your master?"

"I've seen the doctor, of course."

"And got your orders?"

There was no confession.

"How long have you been about Ashboro?"

"Three days."

"Dogging my footsteps?"

"I've seen you, certainly."

"Why does Nicholas Burke take such great interest in me?" put Martin with another smile.

"How should I know?" snapped Mr. Gump.

"Oh, you're as innocent as a lamb," said Martin, with undisguised sarcasm. "You wouldn't hurt a fly, Handy. Now!"

The hand of the detective fell heavily upon Handy's shoulder.

"There is one of two things for you to do," he went on. "You will leave Ashboro this night, going on the 11:30 train, or you will give the undertaker a job."

Mr. Gump did not answer.

"It is 11:10 now. You will swear not to communicate in any way with your employer. If you do, it's the old crime, Handy, and I will see that you enter those dark doors and leave no hope behind. Stand over yonder against the wall."

Mr. Gump rose stiffly and obeyed. Martin got into his clothes with one eye on the intruder and put on his hat.

"Come!" said he, sternly. "We'll catch the train," and they went downstairs and out into the silvery light, Martin still carrying the deadly something in his hand.

The little frame station was deserted. The caretaker had gone home, and nothing but a sleeping dog occupied the platform. The animal, roused by the tread of the two men, raised his head, took in the situation, and dozed off again.

The men had not spoken during the tramp to the station. They waited in silence for the train. Presently a whistle came over the wooded hills. Then the rumble of the night train saluted their ears. The engine puffed up to the platform and paused as it were for breath.

"Get aboard!" whispered Martin to Mr. Gump. "Remember! If you ever report to your master—and I'll know it if you do—you'll do time for twenty years. I'm down here in the interests of justice. I'm here to save a dove from the coils of a serpent, and to preserve a man's honor as well. A still tongue is your salvation, Handy. Get aboard! Go somewhere—to the North Pole, to perdition, if you prefer, but somewhere. I won't be trifled with."

Martin pushed his prisoner up the steps, the engine shrieked, and the train went roaring into the Southern night.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE INQUEST.

LUCILLE'S encounter with Martin Box did not set her mind at ease. Altho the detective had assured her that he came from Hasketh Seaforth, she was fearful that he had doubts of his innocence. This, however, did not shake her confidence in her lover; but why had he not sent a message by the sleuth?

Then, in addition to all this, came back to her Martin's observations concerning Mona. The blind girl could not be guilty; Lucille's love was too deeply rooted to mistrust the afflicted one, altho she had been found in the room of the deed. Surely Mona would not take the life of one who had been so kind to her, treating her as one of his own children, and lavishing upon her all the affection of his warm Southern nature.

It was with many misgivings that Lucille waited for the return of Martin Box.

Mona seemed to change as the hours wore on. She began by taking long rambles alone in the grounds, sometimes going so far that the shades of twilight descended ere she returned. Lucille remembered that the blind girl had spoken of some one quitting the library after her visit on that fatal night. If she had heard a retreating footstep, who had made it?

The night of the following day came before Doctor Burke reappeared. He acted like a man who was confident of final victory, and he found Lucille with resolution written on her face.

"We are to have an inquest," said he, meeting her in the main hall. "The mystery surrounding the death of your uncle must be solved."

The girl looked at him, but did not speak.

"For convenience sake it will be conducted here," he went on. "It is necessary in the interests of justice," and then he passed into the library, where Dan had sheeted the dead and put things to rights.

That afternoon the sheriff and the coroner came. The former was a tall man with a shaven face and a pair of foxy eyes, while the latter was a timid-looking individual who looked as if he could be made putty in any one's hands. Presently Doctor Dredge drove up in his phaeton and made a part of the company.

The persons gathered in the ample parlor constituted a solemn-looking group. The whole household was there with the exception of Mona. Seated where she could see and hear everything, Lucille listened to the startling testimony of Nicholas Burke.

In effect it was that he had been summoned from the North to attend Morgan Dalray, who was suffering from some mysterious malady which had baffled the skill of the family physician. He considered himself an authority on poisons. He stated that upon examination he had discovered that the planter was suffering from curare poison, and explained to the jury that had been hastily impaneled that curare was one of the deadliest poisons in the world, a product of the wild forests of South America, where it was manufactured by the natives to take the lives of men and animals. He was making good headway with his case when the unexpected happened. Curare had again been introduced into Morgan Dalray's night glass, and it had brought about his death.

The room remained still for some minutes after Doctor Burke's testimony. The little fat coroner fidgeted in his seat and blinked his eyes like an owl. Then he readjusted his old-fashioned spectacles and turned to Nicholas Burke.

"You are very sure, doctor," said he, "that death was caused by curare?"

"There is no doubt of it," was the reply.

"That dread poison works on the heart, does it not?"

The coroner seemed anxious to produce an effect.

"It works on the vital organs, including the heart," said Doctor Burke.

"And your remedies would have brought the deceased out of the shadows?"

"I was using the only known antidote to curare, an antidote which I discovered, altho this poison is said to have none."

"Hum!" muttered the coroner. "That is all, doctor. Now call Daniel Gustin."

Lucille started at mention of the servant's name. Dan arose from a chair in the corner and took the witness' seat. He did not look at her; in fact he seemed purposely to avoid her gaze. He drew a hand across his forehead and looked at the little official.

"Mr. Gustin, how long have you resided at the Hall?" began Coroner Toots.

"Twenty-one years."

"What, if anything, suspicious have you observed since Morgan Dalray was stricken by his peculiar malady?"

"What do you mean by anything suspicious?" queried Dan.

"Have you seen any one in the library or near the deceased who was not welcome there?"

"I have seen one person in the library who might not have been welcome."

"Who was that person?"

"It was Mr. Hasketh Seaforth."

Mr. Toots made a note of the name on a pad near his fat hand.

"When did you see Hasketh Seaforth in the library?"

"On three occasions some nights ago."

"Did he enter the room alone?"

"He did, sir."

"What did he do in the library?"

"He took a small phial from his pocket and dropped something from it in master's night glass."

The jurymen craned their necks forward and looked knowingly at one another.

"What passed between the deceased and Hasketh Seaforth during the latter's presence in the library?" continued Coroner Toots.

"Nothing, sir. The master was asleep."

"That is all, Mr. Gustin."

**Sudden Death**

Before an Insurance Company will take a risk on your life the examining physician will test your water and report whether you are a good risk. When your kidneys get sluggish and clog, you suffer from backache, sick-headache, dizzy spells, or twinges and pains of lumbago, rheumatism and gout, or sleep is disturbed two or three times a night —take heed, before too late!

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The coroner lapsed into self-communing for a few seconds.

"I understand," said he, "in fact, it is generally known, that Hasketh Seaforth is not in the neighborhood, nor has he been for several days. Now, doctor," he turned to the man from the North, "since you say that curare has been placed in the night glass within the last few hours, how do you account for it?"

"Many people who commit crimes have accomplices," answered Nicholas Burke, promptly.

"A fact too well known to be disputed," commented Toots. "When you entered the library on the fatal night and found Morgan Dalray dead, whom, if any person, did you find with him?"

"I found one of the inmates of this house, a blind girl named Mona."

Lucille gasped at this.

"What was she doing?"

"She was crouched at the foot of a chair, shivering."

"Is it possible, doctor, that this girl, who is evidently unsophisticated regarding poisons, could have administered the drug herself, considering her affliction?"

"Some blind people are the cutest in the world," was the reply. "I have already remarked that murderers often have accomplices."

"The jury have doubtless heard you, doctor."

"And criminals frequently choose for their accomplices those whom the ordinary person would not suspect."

"Quite natural," commented Coroner Toots.

Lucille, pallid to the temples, was bending forward with words battling for utterance.

"Where is Mona, the blind girl?" asked the official.

"She has not been seen since this morning," answered the voice of Dan.

"We must have her here," commanded Toots. "This is a serious matter."

"Mona sometimes, and especially of late, takes long walks over the grounds," Dan explained.

"You will search the grounds for her, Mr. Gustin. This investigation will not adjourn until she has been produced."

Dan arose and picked up his hat. At that moment his eyes met Lucille's. The girl thought there was encouragement in his look, but he was gone before she could fully analyze it.

"Mr. Toots," suddenly said the heiress of Hedstone Hall, leaning forward, "may I be called in this investigation?"

"By and by, if I see fit," was the rather cold reply. "We want the missing witness to fit in at this particular place. I will not forget your request, Miss Van Cleve." And Lucille settled back into her chair.

"Here she is!" suddenly exclaimed a voice, and all eyes were directed toward the hall door.

Mona was there, white-faced and with soil on the fringe of her skirts. Her hair, somewhat disheveled, rendered her beauty the more conspicuous, and she was framed by the door like a Madonna in gilt.

Sheriff Tonson stepped forward and laid his hand on the blind girl's arm.

"Who is it?" asked Mona.

"I am the sheriff, and you are wanted to testify at the inquest now sitting in this room."

"The inquest? My God!" leaped from the blind girl's throat. "I am wanted to testify? Is that it? Is Doctor Burke in the room?"

"He is present, miss," said Toots.

"Then let him tell all he knows!" and she stopped.

Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of this interesting story. You will miss a great treat if you do not read it to the end. We will give you constantly the very best stories of entertainment that money will buy, so send in your subscription and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing so. You will not regret it.

* * *

## Plain English.

Mrs. Banks was just getting ready to go out while her patient husband waited in the doorway, watching her complete her toilet. By the extraordinary contortions of her neck, he concluded that she was trying to get a glimpse of the back of her new blouse, and by the tense lines about her lips he concluded her mouth was full of pins. A writer who had the story direct from Mr. Banks gives this account of it:

"Umph—goof—suff—wuff—sh—ffspog?" she asked.

"Yes, dear," he agreed. "It looks all right."

"Ouf—wun—so—gs — ph — mf — ugh—ight?" was her next remark.

"Perhaps it would look better if you did that," he nodded; "but it fits very nicely as it is."

She gasped and emptied the pins into her hands.

"I've asked you twice to raise the blinds, so that I can get more light, James!" she exclaimed. "Can't you understand plain English?"

* * *

### A Difference.

"Have you had your summer vacation?"

"Yes. Just finished it. Now I'm going home and get some rest."

## Her Strange Confession.

(Continued From Page 3.)

eyes like that, I'll marry her or give up living."

A blush stole over Grace's bright face, and she remarked slowly: "If I ever meet a man who can make me feel as Rose looks, I'll marry him," and she nodded her head emphatically.

By this time Young had recovered himself, so he asked banteringly: "Even if he is poor?"

"If he hasn't a cent to his name."

"And where would your luxury come from?"

"I would have luxury enough in loving," Grace replied, more seriously than Young had ever before heard her speak.

"But love sometimes flies," he began.

Grace interrupted sharply: "Not such love as Rose's. Oh, did you catch that?" she whispered, and Young only clutched her little hand in reply, his lips refusing to answer.

Both had caught the tender, worshipful look in Richard's eyes, as he had turned and caught his wife looking at him. It opened up to these two worldly young people such a vista of devotion as neither had dreamed existed, and they both were overwhelmed by it for the moment.

This capital story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

## Bug the Beggar.

There was a hole in a fence in the province of Ski-Ko, and Bug the beggar did pause thereat and murmur, "What a beautiful hole! Truly I must do something with that."

And he did stand with his back to it with his left arm thrust thru it even up to the elbow, and then he held out his hat and exclaimed: "Oh, good people witness a man who had his left arm cut off in a shooting cracker factory. Alms, for the love of Mica."

And no one heeded him, and his empty hat remained so.

So Bug the beggar thrust his right leg thru the hole, and exclaimed thus wise: "Oh, elegant people, behold a man who hath had his leg bitten off by a whale while innocently fishing for minnows. Alms, for the love of Petrarch!"

And still he was not heeded. So he thrust his whole body thru the hole, so that only his head and chest were visible, and thus he exclaimed: "Oh, luscious people, regard a man who hath had three-quarters of his body blown away in the Kow-Mein War."

And lo and behold, the populace, murmuring, "Poor caitiff, we will slip him a sen or so, and save ourselves the trouble and expense of giving checks to the war relief committee," did shower his hat with sens until Bug the beggar was rich enough to buy a Ford-main-ling car and ride about begging like a gentleman.

TY COBB, SUPERMAN

World's Greatest Baseball Player tells how

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THIS GREAT GIANT OF STRENGTH AND ENDURANCE SAYS HE NOW PLAYS A BETTER GAME THAN WHEN HE WAS YOUNGER

Physician explains why taking Nuxated Iron gave Ty Cobb such tremendous strength and vitality after he was so weakened and all "rundown"—says it will often increase the strength and power of delicate, nervous folks 200 per cent. in two weeks' time.

New York, N. Y.—When interviewed in his apartment at Bretton Hall, Ty Cobb said: "Hundreds of people write to me to know how I train and what I do to keep up that force and vitality which enables me to play practically every day of the entire baseball season. They wonder why I can play a better game today than when I was younger. The secret is keeping up the supply of iron in my blood—exactly what everyone else can do if they will.

"At the beginning of the present season I was nervous and run down from a bad attack of tonsilitis, but soon the papers began to state 'Ty Cobb has "come back." He is hitting up the old stride.' The secret was iron—Nuxated Iron filled me with renewed life.

"Now they say I'm worth $50,000 a year to any baseball team, yet without plenty of iron in my blood I wouldn't be worth five cents. Nuxated Iron supplies that 'stay there' strength and vim that make men of mark and women of power." Continuing, Dr. Sauer said: "Mr. Cobb's case is only one of hundreds which I could cite from my own personal experience, which proves conclusively the astonishing power of Nuxated Iron to restore strength and vitality, even in most complicated chronic conditions."

Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with the blood pressure of a boy of 20 and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact, a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret he said was taking iron—nuxated iron had filled him with renewed life. At 30 he was in bad health, at 46 he was careworn and nearly all in. Now at 50 a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth. As I have said a hundred times over, iron is the greatest of all strength builders. If people would only throw away patent medicines and nauseous concoctions and take simple nuxated iron, I am convinced that the lives of thousands of persons might be saved who now die every year from pneumonia, grippe, consumption, kidney, liver and heart trouble, etc. The real and true cause which started their diseases was nothing more nor less than a weakened condition brought on by lack of iron in the blood. Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence, you become weak, pale and sickly looking, just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see for yourself how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, rundown people who were ailing all the while double their strength and endurance and entirely get rid of all symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron simply to save a few cents. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated like nuxated iron if you want it to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless.

Many an athlete or prize fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the affray, while many another has gone to inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron.—E. Sauer, M. D.

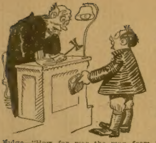
I am astonished at the tremendous strength and endurance which I so quickly obtained from taking Nuxated Iron—I feel younger and stronger today than ever before in my life, and the proof is shown by the fact that I play a better game than when I was younger.

Tyrus R. Cobb

A good batter must be in prime physical condition—he needs a cool head, a quick eye and tremendous strength to put the swing behind the bat.

Ty Cobb is undoubtedly the greatest baseball player in the history of the game. A short time ago he was weakened and all "rundown"—today he is a miracle of strength and endurance, due to filling his blood with plenty of iron. He says Nuxated Iron has given him new life and renewed energy and put the old-time vim and vigor of youth into his blood.

NOTE—Nuxated Iron, recommended above by Dr. Sauer, is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well-known to druggists and whose iron constituents are widely prescribed by eminent physicians everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in Nuxated Iron that they offer to forfeit $100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron and increase their strength 200 per cent. or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.—Advertisement.



Judge—"How far was the man from you when you first saw him?"

Chauffeur—"Ten rods!"

Judge—"And couldn't you stop?"

Chauffeur—"I had stopped! He was ten rods behind!"

### Her Strong Point.

"If you do that again, Tommie, I'll have to scold you."

"And do you want me to do it again, mamma?"

"Of course I don't want you to do it again."

"Because pop says you just love to scold."

### The Stupid Clerk.

P. O. Clerk (to superior)—"Can't understand this address, sir. It reads 'John Jones, Y. Hotel.' There's no such hotel here."

Superior (looking at it)—"Where are your wits? Deliver at the Wyandotte Hotel at once."

### Obeying Orders.

Cassidy had been engaged on trial at the new building operations at the end of the town, but very soon the foreman found occasion to complain of his slackness.

"That hod of yours holds twelve bricks, my boy! Don't let me see you going up the ladder with eleven again!"

Cassidy duly noted the instructions, and endeavored to carry them out. But one morning the supply of bricks ran out, and for his last journey he found that he had only eleven bricks left. Whereupon he ran to the foot of the ladder, and called out to the men on the scaffolding at the top.

"What d'yer want?" cried a voice from above.

"Throw me down a brick! I'm wan short of me load!"

### Little Brother.

Miss Boss was a settlement worker and one day she called at the home of the Thompsons. She found no one at home but a girl of about 12 and a smaller brother. After talking with the little mother a few moments, she said:

"And does your little brother help you at all? What does he do all day?"

The little girl gave her younger brother a proud glance, and said: "Say, kid, smoke a cigarette fer de lady an' swallow de stub!"

### Literary Cure.

"I'm troubled with insomnia, doctor," said the author.

"Too bad you can't take your own medicine," said the doctor.

"What do you mean?"

"I've seen lots of people sleep over your books."

### Pat's Retort.

A very stout Irish peddler was coming down the North Strand, Dublin, leading a very lean-looking horse. A visitor, who was standing at a hotel door, said to him:

"Get inside that horse, Pat, and it will help to fill him out a bit."

"So I would," replied Pat, "if his mouth was as big as yours."

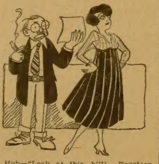
### A Special Name.

"What are you, my man, a plain tramp?"

"You might say so, mum. Or if you wishes to follow the plan so prevalent these days of giving everything a special name——"

"Yes?"

"You might call me an inefficiency expert."



Hub—"Look at this bill! Fourteen dollars for perfumery—for mere odors that fade away forever!"

Wife—"Gone to meet the smoke from the $20 worth of cigars you smoked last month."

### It Was Only Fair.

Two Irishmen were working on a farm. When dinner time came they were called to dine off a large basin of broth. The farmer's wife had only one spoon, so she gave Pat a fork. Poor Pat was getting nothing, while Mike was very busy. When the broth was about one-third gone Pat said: "Arrah, now, Mike, you dig a bit now and I'll shovel."

### Disgusted.

"Why are you disgusted, Dennis?"

"I just hear-r-d wan man call another a liar. And the man that was called a liar said the other man would have to apologize or there would be a fight."

"And why should that make you look so sad?"

"The other man apologized."

### Thin Sandwiches.

"What's Flubdub up to?"

"He is going to entertain the company with a few tricks with cards."

"But those are our sandwiches he's shuffling there."

### Deadly.

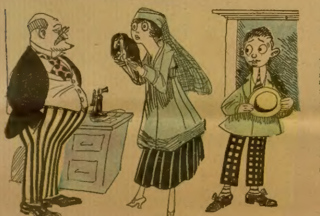
Bacon—"A cucumber always reminds me of a cartridge. It's nearly the same shape."

Egbert—"But hardly as dangerous, do you think?"

### One of the Signs.

"Are you sure this is a fashionable resort?"

"It must be. Nearly everybody you meet laments because the war makes a trip abroad quite out of the question."



Surgeon—"Nothing can save your dog but an operation, and it will be in the nature of an experiment at that."

Woman—"But why not try it on my husband first?"

### No Danger of Slipping.

The manager of a millionaire's magnificent estate had sent for a roofer to repair a leak in the roof of the mansion.

Pat Flinn was sent to do the job, and as he entered the front hall the butler, in a subdued voice, said:

"You are requested to be careful of the inlaid floors as you go thru the halls; they have just been waxed."

"Oh, sure, there's no danger of me slippin' on thim," replied Flinn. "I've spikes in me shoes."

### A Little Heathen.

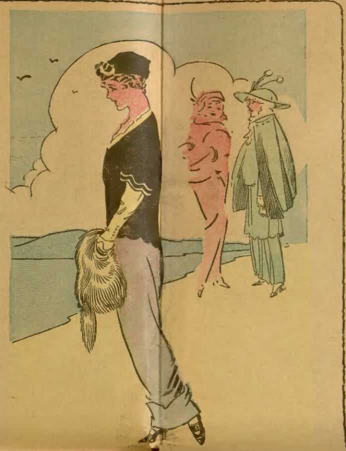
Eugene was a very mischievous little boy and his mother's patience was worn to the limit. She had spoken very nicely to him several times without effect. Finally she said:

"You are a perfect little heathen!"

"Do you mean it?" demanded Eugene.

"Indeed, I do," said the mother.

"Then, mother," said the boy, "why can't I keep that ten cents a week you gimme for the Sunday school collection? I guess I'm as hard up as any of the rest of 'em."



"She's no lady."

"Why, I always thought her most [illegible]"

"On the surface, yes. But what do you think of a woman who wears her little boy's football shoes to the bargain sale and spikes every one who gets in her way?"

### Wished to Speak to Him.

Having been shown the speaking tube and had its uses explained, Flynn, the new porter, blew a mighty blast in it. Hearing the whistle, Mr. Hobart came to the tube and inquired: "What's wanted down there?"

"'Tis Oi, Paddy Flynn. Ar' ye the boss?"

"I am," said Mr. Hobart.

"Well, thin," yelled Paddy Flynn, "shtick yer head out av th' second-shtory windy whoile Oi shtep out on th' soidwalk. Oi want to talk t'ye!"

### Proof.

"Do you appreciate the fine arts?"

"I should say I do!" replied the ardent baseball fan. "Yesterday when our pitcher struck out three men in rapid succession I was so excited I threw my $12 Panama into the air and I haven't seen it since."

### Busy Youth.

"Algie says he doesn't have so much leisure time on his hands as he used to."

"You don't say so! What is he doing?"

"He's taken to rolling his own cigarettes."

### Father's Agony.

"Ah! The chiming of the wedding bells—"

"No. That is the bride's father, who has to pay the bills, wringing his hands."—Judge.

### Misunderstood Him.

She was from Boston; he from Oklahoma. "You have traveled a great deal in the West, have you not, Miss Bacon?"

"Oh, yes, indeed—in California and Arizona and even in New Mexico."

"And did you ever see the Cherokee strip?"

There was a painful silence, but finally she looked over her glasses at him and said: "Sir, I deem your question exceedingly rude."

### Three Times Four.

"For goodness sake, John, how long did you boil these eggs?"

"Just as long as you told me to, my dear."

"Impossible! They're hard as bricks."

"I boiled them just twelve minutes."

"Twelve? Why, I told you that three minutes was long enough for an egg!"

"Yes, dear, but I boiled four of them."

### A Quick Reply.

The repartee of the conductorette may not be so full-blooded as that of her male counterpart, but its rapier-like qualities are decidedly more effective.

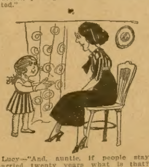
"'Alloa, Ethel!" shouted a jovial carman to one of the fare ladies one chilly morning recently. "Feeling cold, old dear? Why don't cher turn yer collar up like me?"

"Well, you see," sweetly replied the girl, "I've got a clean neck."

### His Burden.

Mrs. Flatbush—"I see a woman is the inventor of a suitcase that can be folded flat and carried under one arm when empty."

Mr. Flatbush—"Good! That leaves hubbie's other arm free to hold the other fourteen packages she has accumulated."



Lucy—"And, auntie, if people stay married twenty years what is that? Wooden?"

Auntie—"No, Freda, dear! Solid ivory!"

### The Name of It.

An elderly bachelor and an equally elderly spinster sat in a concert hall. The selections were apparently entirely unfamiliar to the gentleman, but when the "Wedding March of Mendelssohn" was begun he pricked up his ears.

"That sounds familiar," he exclaimed. "But I'm not strong on those classical pieces. That is a good 'un. What is it?" The spinster cast down her eyes.

"That," she told him demurely, "is the 'Maiden's Prayer.'"

### The Wag's Question.

A wag one day asked his friend: "How many knaves do you suppose are in this street besides yourself?"

"Besides myself?" replied the other, in a heat. "Do you mean to insult me?"

"Well, then," replied the first, "how many do you reckon including yourself?"

### Helping Out.

"And has your daughter's course in domestic science interested her any in the housework?"

"To some extent. Occasionally she condescends to show her mother wherein her old-fashioned methods are all wrong."

### Nearly Always, Willie.

"Pa, I know which is the most warlike nation."

"Well, my son, which is it?"

"Vacci-nation, pa. 'Cause it's always in arms, isn't it?"

### Merely Homely.

Shortsighted Officer—"It's all right, my man, you can take off your mask now; the gas has passed."

Private—"Beggin' your pardon, sir, I ain't got no mask on!"

### Worth It.

"Clara!"

He breathed the word as a sigh of deep devotion, and laid his hand upon his throbbing heart.

The damsel waited coyly.

"Clara," he made another start, "I love you—I love you with all the ardor of a nature free from guile. Whisper but one word, the word which will make me the happiest of men. Or, if your maidenly modesty seals your lips, give me some token, some memento which I can treasure as a souvenir of this blissful day. Oh, Clara, one lock of your auburn hair—one little curl——"

As his voice died into a breathless silence Clara blushed and cast her eyes down. Then, as her wooer picked up a pair of scissors, she stayed his hand.

"No, Percy, they are unnecessary," she murmured, as she unhooked her switch. "It cost me 30 shillings, but love like yours is worth it."

### Both Wrong.

At a certain mill there is a notice on the elevator which reads as follows:

"No one allowed to use this elevator except the man in charge. Any one doing so will be discharged."

One morning Billy ——, a rather witty fellow, was waiting to go up from the second room, when who should step off the elevator alone but the manager.

Billy was stepping on to go up when the manager turned round and said.

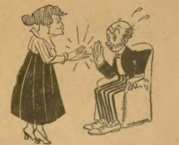
"I say, can't you read?"

"Yes," said Billy.

"Well, what does that notice say?" asked the manager.

Billy turned round and read the notice, and exclaimed:

"By gum, we'll both be sacked if we're catched!"



Mrs. Knagg—"When you speak to me don't you dare to use such sharp words!"

Mr. Knagg—"But, my dear, when I speak to you sharp words are the only ones I can get in edgewise."

### Why He Growled.

Rivers had come home and was stumbling over the things in the dark hallway.

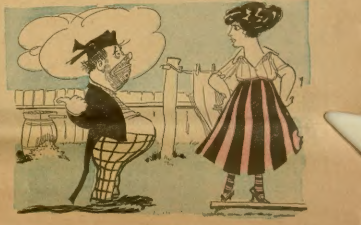
"What are you growling about, dear?" called Mrs. Rivers from the floor above.

"I am growling," he answered in his deepest bass voice, "to drown the barking of my shins."

### Served Him Right.

"I hear you've been fishing for several days."

"No," replied the exact individual. "I was fishing for fish and devoted several days to the alleged sport without getting a bite."



Tramp—"Lady, would you care if I ate a little o' dat ash heap in your back yard?"

Woman—"No; not if you will use some knives and forks that need scouring!"

### Treat for the Boarders.

"Ma," queried the small daughter of the boarding-house keeper, "what shall I do with these basting threads?"

"Give them to me and I will stir them into the frosting for the cocoanut cake," said her mother.

### Not Uncommon.

"Bliggins says he's a cynic."

"He isn't," replied Miss Cayenne. "He is one of those people who say disagreeable things and try to make believe they think them funny."

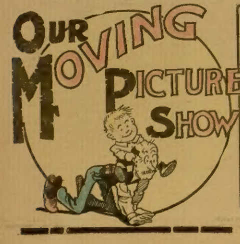
### His Excuse.

"It's wrong of me to take this food," said the tramp, as he reached out for the pie in the window; "but," he added, reflectively, "I've had repeated inquiries for it from the department of the interior, and I shall now deliver the goods."

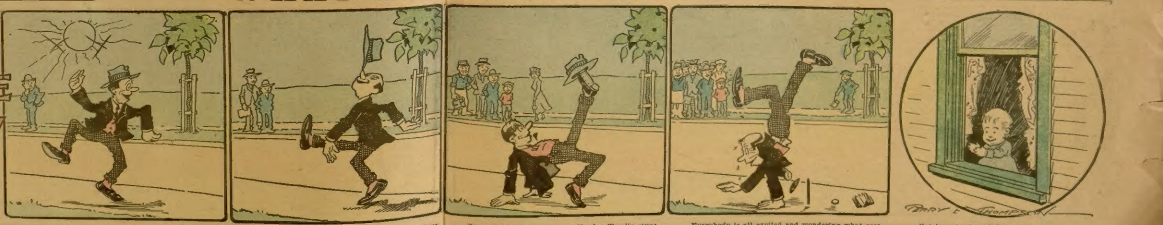
### Their First Quarrel.

Mr. Newed—"Oh, well, you wanted me, Emily, and I wanted you. That's about the way of it, my dear."

Mrs. Newed—"But you wanted me first, Jack, you know you did."—Judge.



## WHAT AILED JONES



This is Jones, and he has everybody guessing as to what he is training for.

Some think he is going into vaudeville and others think he is learning some of the Russian dances.

Or maybe he is practicing a Charley Chaplin stunt for the movies. At any rate——

Everybody is all excited and wondering what sort of bug is eating him.

But here in the window of his home is the i nocent cause of it all.

# DOWN WITH HIS SHIP

## Or, The White Creeper

### By William H. Manning

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CHAPTER XII.

BEFORE the diver stood a man from whose saturated clothes water ran liberally to the deck. It was impossible to tell, in the dim light, whether he was white of dusky of skin, but as his figure sagged and he put out a hand to hold fast to the bulwark rail he did not look dangerous.

"Speak up!" Roger added. "Men don't live in the sea. Who are you?"

"For Heaven's sake, give me shelter and protection!" cried the newcomer in plain English. "Hide me, hide me! Don't let the pirates get me!"

"Answer my question first. Who are you?"

"My name is Rufus Garley, and I'm naturally as white as yourself, tho I don't look it. I'm a man that's been mishandled by those native demons. That ship beyond the farther reef is the pirate craft of Captain Bragon, and he's with her now. I was a prisoner and their cook. I escaped in a boat two days ago, and thought I had got away from them, but as I was at halt on that reef they appeared. I've been hiding, but I know they suspect I am near, and they will find me if they can and butcher me. Hide me, hide me!"

He had poured forth the words feverishly, and great terror was apparent in speech and manner. Roger understood now why the men from the White Creeper had wanted to search the brigantine.

"They have hunted the reef over," the man resumed, "but I hid in a niche among the rocks and they overlooked me. Still, they found signs of my having been there, for I had rashly made a fire to cook fish."

The diver nodded. He recalled his impression, earlier, that he had seen smoke on the east twin.

"Our captain is the man you want to see," he replied, "but he isn't a person to turn down a man in distress. Come below with me."

"Bless you, sir, bless you!" was the tremulous reply.

Roger had expected that Hardy would be in his berth, but second consideration of the odd sound had worried the skipper, and they met him at the foot of the companionway. The dripping figure gave him a start, but he soon had all the facts known to Roger.

"Hide me. Save me!" Garley then implored. "If Bragon catches me I shall not get even a merciful killing. His way is to torture."

"He won't do that while I and my sailors live!" asserted the captain stoutly. "I can't stand idle and see any white man butchered by heathen islanders. We will hide you."

It was well said, but an uneasy mind was back of it. Bragon's power was absolute, for it was backed up by the cannon in the bows of his ship and the numerous rifles of his crew, and he might take a notion to search the brigantine again. Skill would be necessary to baffle the pirate.

Except that he was a man whose troubles appealed to all normal minds, the newcomer appeared to be a small feature of the case, and Hardy rushed his affairs thru. He was provided with dry clothes, properly fed, and then stowed away in the hold. With the brigantine in ballast and no cargo to hide in, it was a poor place for concealment, but nothing better could be done then.

When he was properly seen to the other two men returned to the captain's quarters. Hardy took the diver by the arm forcibly.

"See here, Cooper," he exclaimed. "I went your views. You carry sense in your head. We are bound to have trouble with that gray schooner. How shall we look out for ourselves?"

"Trip your anchor and get it to the catheads without delay, and then send up your canvas and slip out of these parts while night lasts."

"But the Riding Brave——"

"Aren't you satisfied that she never went to wreck hereabouts?"

"Well, yes."

"Call it she was saved. Now, why not save your own life, too?"

"I've been thinking about that White Creeper. You say you are sure she has been dogging us for some days, yet she does not attack us, tho her trade is piracy, and we offer some plunder. Why is Bragon so passive?"

"Has that bug got into your own brain, sir? It's been in mine even longer. The gray schooner fell in behind us, tagged us, and has stopped where we stopped. Now, I admit that it doesn't look reasonable that a gang of islanders should feel any interest in the movements of this ship but who can swear to that? Men knew you were going somewhere while you were outfitting in San Francisco. Did the pirates know that? Did they follow to see what you wanted to do, and are they waiting until you have done it before cutting our throats?"

"Why should all that be?"

"Suppose they suspect something and don't want the truth to come out about the Riding Brave?"

"Why, man, all hands in the Brave were Americans, and yonder fellows are heathen islanders."

"Are you sure nobody is back of them?"

"Eh?"

"If Cyrus Brayden stole the Brave and its valuable cargo, he would not want it known. If he's alive, where is he? Watching in or near San Francisco? If so, and he learned you were about to make a voyage of peculiar nature, wouldn't he want to keep tabs on you?"

Hardy was silent a long while. The words had gone home to his mind, but an entirely new idea had been presented, and it was not to be disposed of lightly.

"This is a big possibility you have presented to me," he finally answered. "If Brayden really stole the Brave, he is too prudent to take up his residence in San Francisco, for he is supposed to be a dead man. Remember that the other boat from the Brave was never heard from, not even when my owners sent a schooner to hunt for them. Brayden is technically dead, and it wouldn't do for him to be seen in 'Frisco. Still, he may be near there, if reckless enough to take risks, or——"

"Or have a man there to represent him."

"Yes."

"Now you get close to my position. I admit that I am building on an invisible foundation, but something is afoot, and we want to study the possibilities."

"True. I wish the men who owned the Brave were here now, to help us study. Fine men, my owners were—Wallace Brothers by name, and a credit to the human kind. Three of them. Never knew a Wallace yet who wasn't square and honest and intelligent. Fine family! We need the Wallace brains here now."

Roger grinned as if he saw some joke, but the fact escaped the captain's notice, and the reply was lightly spoken.

"Seems we've got to rely upon yours, plus the poor apology for brains that I can offer for some help. Now, as to Brayden——"

He paused as the door of a stateroom unclosed, and Hagar came out attended by Porgera. She smiled at the two men and moved lightly to a chair.

"Deep in consultation?" she asked carelessly.

"Just a trifle, my dear," the captain replied.

"Thinking, thinking! It is dreadfully hard work. I've tried, and I don't like it. It makes my poor head swing like a pendulum."

"I wouldn't try!" urged Hardy, quickly.

"I won't try. Are not all deep thinkers more or less deranged?"

"Eh? Well, it would be hard to make them believe it."

"Yet I think it is generally so admitted. Men in public affairs occasionally spring a peculiar plan upon the public, but will it stand the test of critical analysis? I am told that it will not. Socrates and other old philosophers were undoubtedly deranged—but why linger on outside matters? Do you know, sir, I am all impatience to sail for San Francisco and meet your granddaughter. I know she and I will be intimate friends."

"Not a doubt of it, madam."

"I can easily imagine our meeting," the girl pursued, smiling. "I shall go to the hotel and say to the clerk, 'Have my card sent to Miss Hagar, granddaughter of the captain.' Then, when I see the dear child, I shall cry out, 'Behold me, for I am Persia!'"

Just then the speaker dropped her

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handkerchief, and, forestalling all helpers, stooped to recover it.

"Her mind is getting worse!" Hardy whispered to Roger. "She has got mixed and now thinks she is Persis. Sad, sad!"

"Steady, steady!" the diver whispered back, pressing Hardy's arm warningly.

The afflicted girl resumed her proper position, shook the handkerchief for a moment, and then stopped short.

"Why," she asked, "do you look at me so strangely?"

"I was thinking," Roger replied, some uncertainty in his voice. "I suppose you now think you know all about the captain's granddaughter?"

"Hardly that. As she has been reared so far away it is hard to grasp everything from hearsay.. Pray, how long did you say she has been insane?"

The captain moved restlessly. The new turn in Hagar's malady was too much for him to deal with, and he looked appealingly at Roger. That young man, too, felt unequal to the task, but he tried to be both prudent and penetrating.

"Her affliction is only transient, and she will soon be perfectly recovered—perfectly, you understand. When you meet her you will see that it is so. Do you sail soon?"

"Just as soon as this caravan has traversed the desert. After that I will see if my telegram, ordering quarters in the ship, has been properly attended to."

"Perhaps I may be able to help you. Let me see! I do not recall your full name at present. May I ask what it is?"

"Certainly. I am named Persis——"

She paused, meditated, and then a look of dismay came to her face.

"Why," she exclaimed, "I can't remember what my last name is!"

### CHAPTER XIII.

WHILE the waif of the sea grapple with mental confusion to get light on her problem she had two rapt watchers, but their mental mood differed greatly. Hagar was talking in an entirely new vein, and to the captain it seemed that the last remnant of her mind was flickering away, but Roger was not of that opinion. To him it seemed that the change in her fancies was a drifting toward reason, a partial casting off of the powers of darkness, and that great hope lay in her new ideas. He leaned forward, and, softly and unobtrusively, asked a question.

"Have I not heard you say that your name was Hardy?"

"Why, certainly!" the girl replied, and as her face lighted up with delight she clapped her hands in the same spirit. "Yes, I am Persis Hardy, daughter of Elmer Hardy of Yokohama, Japan. I am on my way to San Francisco to see my grandfather, Captain Joseph Hardy. He is a feeble, aged man, and he needs my care and oversight. Dear granddaddy!" and her voice grew tender. "It will be such a delight to meet him. I've not seen him since I was 10 years old, and remember but little about his looks, but he is a dear, good man!"

The captain sat with wild eyes and hanging jaw, staring at her in something little less than panic, but Roger's hand had secretly stolen under the table and gripped his leg so tightly that warning was conveyed even to his startled senses.

"Everything will be all right, Miss Persis," Roger returned promptly. "You will get to San Francisco safely and see the captain. I shall be glad to give my poor help to that end. We will talk it over later, or perhaps I should say, earlier. It is growing late now, about time for getting sleep."

He yawned openly, not in defiance of good breeding, but with a definite purpose in view, and the plan worked well. The girl rose quickly.

"Dear me," she said apologetically, "I am keeping you gentlemen up after hours. Pray excuse me! Now I will retire to my room."

Nobody objected, but Roger added words that were both polite and deferential, and she went without feeling that she was dismissed. Porgera looked at the diver critically, but had the good sense not to interrupt.

When the stateroom door closed behind them the captain turned his attention to his young companion.

"In mercy's name, what is all this?" he demanded. "As near as I can tell, I, too, have gone crazy, but maybe you can prove to the contrary. That girl——"

"Hush!" Roger warned. "Come outside with me."

They went to the foot of the companionway, where the diver stopped and gripped Hardy's arm as tightly as he had gripped him just before.

"Don't you see?" he demanded.

"Man alive, tell me what you—what you are guessing!" Hardy retorted.

"That girl is your granddaughter!"

"Impossible!"

"I tell you, yes! Odd that we never had even a dim suspicion of it before. We knew she was to sail from Japan for San Francisco. Now we can see that she did sail, and that her ship somehow came to grief on the way. She is Persis Hardy!"

"Cooper, you are mad——"

"She said so herself."

"But she is deranged."

"She won't be so much longer. She is groping her way out of mental darkness. I think that a few words on my part would have brought the whole truth back to her, but I asked myself if it was wise. I've heard of persons who were suddenly deranged by a great shock being restored to reason by another shock. If I'd asked her how she felt when she was alone in that boat where the Malays found her, I should have presented the shock, but, captain, reason is coming to her naturally."

Hardy spread his hands in silent eloquence.

"Her youth is helping her," Roger went on forcibly, "and things will be all right. Her mind is casting off its shackles."

"But look here! It's natural, perhaps, I should not recognize a grandchild I've not seen since she was 10 years old, but she—why, my looks have not changed since she saw me last. If this was my Persis she would recognize me at once."

"You forget her mental trouble."

"Ah!"

"Now, look here, captain!" the diver went on excitedly, "you have your grandchild aboard and you are lying at anchor with a pirate ship only a gunshot distant. It is night and you can slip away. Suppose that, in the morning, Bragon again visits the brigantine to hunt for his missing cook, and sees Persis——"

"Enough!" interrupted Hardy, sharply. "Unless the heathen are on watch, I'll have my ship out of this in short order. Deranged young women are not in my line of business, but handling a ship is. The man of me shall act now. We'll weigh anchor and get away."

Roger had reason to admire the captain in the minutes that followed. All hands were called, but in tones little more than whispers, and when they were marshaled they received their orders, with instructions to make no more noise than a nest of mice. The anchor was hauled a-trip, and Roger breathed a sigh of relief when he saw it hove up higher and, finally, brought to the billboard with the shank-painter passed.

The same caution was exercised with the sails, and no more canvas was sent up than was necessary to give her steerageway.

At last, favored by a stern wind, the Shooting Light went clear and crept toward safety. It was a suspenseful moment, for their future depended upon what the men of the White Creeper were doing, but they made the passage of the twin reefs without mishap, and then took to the open sea.

Hardy had overseen all, cool, steady and resourceful of manner, and he now took up the problem of the future. The pirate was the faster vessel, and it was wise to give her the slip. In making the reefs the brigantine's course had been southwest, but he now set her head due north, put his best man at the wheel, and ordered him not to let the needle show the least "flicker" by the binnacle light And so the Shooting Light stood away from her dangerous berth

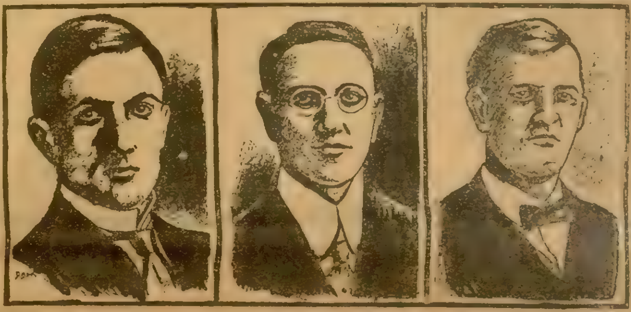
The captain and Roger had no sleep that night. Hardy would not leave the deck, and his young associate kept him company without intermission. A lookout was always aloft, watching for a possible light astern that would show they were pursued, but this did not prevent them from using their own eyes to the same end.

Seldom did more than a minute pass without their sending glances back toward where the White Creeper had last been seen, but there was no [illegible]

That night they came to know [illegible] other better than ever before [illegible] had been thru unusual experience [illegible] gether, and always amicably, and [illegible] gained the reciprocal impression that ability of marked kind was in the case. Now, new danger and the case [illegible] girl in the stateroom made a [illegible] bond between them.

(Continued on Page 15.)

# Three New Oil Millionaires of Oklahoma



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These three Oklahomans recently organized the Crystal Oil Company, each man investing a few hundred dollars. One, a printer, another a clerk, and a third a carpenter; they determined to seek their fortunes in the oil business. They were successful from the first and now have oil properties worth several million dollars, so that each has become a millionaire in less than two years time, and on an investment of only a few hundred dollars.

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This property is now divided into tracts. You can buy from one to ten of these tracts. The tracts are $40 each but you only pay $20 on each tract. You then receive a Warranty Deed to your Tracts. The remaining $20 is later deducted from your earnings after you have received $40 in cash dividends on each tract. In this way we guarantee to return to you in cash, double the amount you invested, before we receive the last half of the purchase price.

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COPIES WEEKLY.

## GENTLE JABS.

Popular watering place—the ice cooler.

Life's most desirable pleasures cost the least.

There's a lot of head work done in a pin factory.

A cheek of brass may enable a man to acquire gold.

Some men look upon religion as a sort of moral fire escape.

Don't expect a soft answer when you call men hard names.

A poor man without principal is usually devoid of interest.

It is easy to get on to the curves of a bowlegged ball pitcher.

Cold storage is a failure when it comes to keeping an engagement.

The board of strategy is the kind you get at a poor boarding-house.

Some writers have a wealth of thought, and all have a thought of wealth.

Love brings flattery to a man's tongue and fluttering to a woman's heart.

The man in the moon is the only chap who seems to thrive on a highball.

The woman of the hour is one who says she will be ready in a minute.

Why isn't a family tree with a ghost roosting on one of the branches a shade tree?

If we could only live on the advice that others give us, the high cost of living would lose its sting.

When a woman breaks a man's heart he hurriedly patches it up again for some other female smasher

The optimist cheers, but the pessimist saves his breath for the purpose of letting out a calamity howl later

The only way to induce the average man to take advice is to slip up on his blind side and drop it into his ear.

Instead of running away from your work try to find a more efficient way of doing it. That is the secret of success

If sympathy could only be converted into cash it's doughnuts to fudge that there wouldn't be so much of it wasted.

It may be better to be happy than to be rich, but very few poor men ever derived any satisfaction from that belief

A man would be given a patrol joy ride if he wore a suit made from striped awning: but a woman can get away with it

The man who tries to buy his way into Heaven may discover later that he gave up money to an unauthorized representative.

We know a lot of men who always grumble about hard times, yet they would consider it an insult if they were offered a job.

# Down With His Ship.

(Continued From Page 13.)

The wreck of the Riding Brave was duly discussed, and their opinions harmonized; the mischief that might come from the pirate ship was thought over, and, last and yet chiefly, they devoted many words to the Hagar, who was possibly Persis.

Day finally dawned, and Hardy himself mounted the shrouds and took a long look astern with his strongest glass. When he descended his face expressed satisfaction.

"Not a flea-bite on the horizon," he said, sighing in relief. "Either the White Creeper has no active designs against us, or her captain thought we were so bound in our sweeping of the bottom of the sea that we would stick to —"

"Possibly he wanted us to stick to until he found out just what we were trying to locate," Roger suggested.

"Quite likely. Well, now, my boy, let's get some sleep. Vilper has the eyes of a cat, and if a ship heaves into sight nobody will be quicker to see her than the mate. You and I will stow a cargo of food into our stomachs and then to bed. The human body demands——"

The speaker stopped short as a new figure appeared before them. It was that of a man spare of flesh and none too strong of body, while he had a face curiously stained with something that defied analysis. At some time in the past he had been white, but he was now brown.

Recognizing the former pirate cook, Hardy looked at him in a friendly way

"Well, mate, how goes it?" he asked bluffly.

"Very well, indeed, sir," replied the man, with gratitude so deep that it was almost animal-like servility. "After you stowed me in the hold I fell asleep quickly, and I've only just waked up. I'm a new man, sir. God bless you for your kindness!"

"Oh, that's all right, my man!" the captain returned heartily. "I wouldn't let those heathen make mutton of you."

"I'd been tortured and then killed if they had got me back, sir. It is something when you feel called upon to thank a man for saving your life, but it's far more when a feller is saved from torture——"

He shivered, broke off, straightened himself, and resumed in a different key.

"Sir, I want to confess everything!"

"Confess! What do you mean?"

"About the Riding Brave."

"What about her?"

"Why, sir, don't you recognize me?"

"No."

"Maybe that's natural, me with my face stained brown with the berry-juice the heathen tattooed me with Sir, I gave my name as Rufus Garley, but my true name is Abner Wise, and I was with you in the Brave when—when things happened there."

"I remember I had a sailor of that name, but, as you say, your brown skin makes against recognition."

"I'm Abner Wise, and you shall have all the facts about how we misused you aboard the full-rigger. You was shamefully tricked, sir, and I was one of the gang, but only a mere sailor. Others started the trick, and carried it out. Listen sir!"

## CHAPTER XIV

THE sailor wavered a little from weakness, but laid hold of the shrouds for support, and went on in a firm voice.

"When you took the Riding Brave out of San Francisco harbor you had a valuable cargo, but it looked sure to be a peaceful voyage, as far as man was concerned, yet mischief was arranged before ever you cast off from your pier. Cyrus Brayden, your mate, was a villain, and a boon chum of Bragon, skipper of the pirate ship sometimes called the White Creeper, and they had schemed to rob you of ship and cargo, and do it without open mutiny.

"To that end they packed your ship with a crew that was in the secret, and was to share in the plunder. I was one of them. Maybe you remember that Brayden was active in selecting that crew for you, sir.

"Well, when the time came Brayden drugged you, giving you a fever that took away your powers of body and mind, so that he became the active commander of the Brave.

"There was no running on a hidden rock, that night, but, [illegible] a thunderous rap was given [illegible] outside your room with a sledge hammer. That wouldn't have deceived a man in his right [illegible] but you was drugged, so it passed. Really, the Brave was as sound as a marlin-spike

'Matters went ahead lively in the fog. One boat was lowered, you was got into it, and the men rowed away. They made you believe the Brave sunk, but she didn't, and the balance of the crew remained on board, and fetched her to a stated rendezvous. Them who was with you in the boat stuck to you until San Francisco was reached, and then scurried away and got back to that rendezvous.

The Brave was taken to the Philippines, and there she and her cargo was sold. We sailors who helped Brayden do his rascally work got a little money out of it, but I squandered mine in riotous living, and was again a dead-broke sailor. Then I was captured by Bragon's men, made cook of the White Creeper, and kept there until I escaped them and finally come to you for shelter. Think of it! Come to the man I had helped to wrong so bitterly'

The speaker's face twisted oddly, and Roger would not have been surprised to see tears running down his cheeks, but the diver had his mind so much on other matters that he did not wait for such signs

"Where is Cyrus Brayden now?" he asked sharply

"Doing business as a merchant in Manila, sir. He took the money got from the sale of the Brave and her cargo and set up for himself

"Oh!"

"The Brave is still in service. Brayden had us paint her over different, and name her over, before selling her. She is now called the Heap of Luck, and plies between Manila and China, and is owned by honest men."

The sailor ended his story and stood looking at Hardy, waiting to see how severely he was to be taken to task. He had received ample attention. Both Roger and the captain showed keen interest, and the latter was too much overjoyed to feel implacable resentment toward the minor schemer against him

Before he could speak, however, there was a new diversion One of the members of the Shooting Light's crew came [illegible] to ask a question of his captain, and he fell under the tattooed man's attention. That person [illegible]

"What? You here [illegible]

The would-be questioner, who was Lem Soper, stared and grew uneasy The recognition was not reciprocated but he saw something in Wise's manner that did not cheer him up. [illegible] [illegible] upon Hardy

"[illegible]," he exclaimed. "If this man is in your crew you had better get rid of him. He is Bela Whiteley, and he was [illegible] one of Cyrus Brayden's boon mates Mischief goes with him

Roger gave Soper a sharp scrutiny and then moved abruptly to his side and grasped his arm combatively

"[illegible] here!" he cried. "I think we want a word with you Somebody knew [illegible] ship was to sail from 'Frisco, and [illegible] the matter up as an added part of the tragedy of the Riding Brave. It was not Brayden, if he is in Manila, so who was it? Who set Bragon on our [illegible] Speak out!

Soper looked like a cornered rat but he was not in mood for confession. He denied, squirmed and twisted in speech but Roger persisted, and the confession finally came sullenly.

"I ain't done nothing that is wrong I was not one of the crew of the Brave, but I did know Brayden. The last

(Continued on Page 19.)

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PENETRATES WITHOUT RUBBING

# Eck Lowrey's Luck

## Or, In Quest of Douglas Beechmere

### By I. M. Shepler

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### CHAPTER XII.

### BILL HOLDS UP ECK

A FEW nights after Eck's present of the revolver, Bill Doty climbed into Pluggy's sheep wagon "Wot you here for?" growled that dusky individual.

"Say, I got to have some money. I'm dead gone broke, and I want some cartridges for this thing," patting a revolver in his hip pocket, hastily answered Bill.

"Your uncle got no money? I got none for you!" was the short reply.

"He drove me off. Told me to 'root hog or die.' He's mad as Hades because we balked in that sheep steal. I told him 'twas you, that you ordered me to pitch in and help that geezer they call Alex, or Eck, or something. We could easy have knocked him a bump on the head that'd settled his ever telling who drove off the sheep."

"You big fool; your uncle another. He goes too far. I leave. I work no more for an idiot. He get us all hung. I work for men in this business that knows how to get sheep an' not get neck in noose. See?" and Pluggy gripped his neck with both hands.

"Well, it's all over now, and can't be helped," was Bill's easy reply: "but say, Plug, I got a job for both of us tonight We'll just simply slip over and take the money that Eck keeps in a belt about his waist. I saw him shift it around a little that night when he thought I was asleep and wasn't. I'll bet it's full of money. We'll divide. Then I'll skip and take all the blame—if there's any blame."

"Pouf! Boys likely to carry hundreds of dollars! Poor boys that come herdin' sheep!" sneered Pluggy

"That shows just how much you know about things back East. Needn't think some of them rich old farmer plugs back there would let their boys go saunterin' up here unless they were well padded with bank bills. That fellow is chuck up with them. He's just up here to be learning how to take care of some big thing comin' to him some day in this line. Can't fool me!"

"We got to lay back the bushes here until that other blows over, I tell you," argued Pluggy. "Do your own holdin' up of boys, an' get—a dollar!"

The sheep were restless that night. "A Chinook wind coming, I reckon," Eck said aloud on one of his trips out to look after them. If Bill had caught him unarmed and out on one of these jaunts, it might not have all turned out as it did. But Bill caught him just as he appeared in the wagon door, coming out for the last time.

At the screech of: "Hold up your hands!" Eck stiffened and stared into the darkness. Then, the flash of the barrel ominously near—contrary to what he supposed he would ever do in such an emergency—sent up his hands flying. He knew it was Bill, but who was fortified back of Bill? Pluggy, Eck felt sure.

"Unstring that belt you wear around you, and pitch it to me!" called Bill, coming nearer

"Come and unstring it yourself, as you call it," answered Eck.

But Bill knew better. One kick of Eck's heavy boot would fix him, for Pluggy had warned him not to shoot unless there was no other way out of it.

"Hand it out here, and hand it quick!" Bill tried to make his voice thunderous.

"You must be crazy! Ask a fellow to hold up his hands and unbuckle a belt all at the same breath! You are not onto your job."

"Well, take your hands down and throw it to me, but remember this thing belches tho instant your hands make any other move," ordered Bill.

"All hunk! Here she comes," were Eck's resigned words, as he tugged at the buckle. "Look out! It's got silver in it, too, and might knock you over. Catch it!"

By the lamplight pouring from the wagon upon Bill's upturned face, Eck was closely watching. As he doubled the belt to throw it, Bill raised his empty hand to catch it, and as he did so unconsciously shifted the revolver in the other hand out of range of Eck's heart.

It was but an instant, yet long enough for the quick-witted boy to throw the belt back instead of out, and with the throw to spring back, shutting the door as he did so. The bullet followed him in, but it sped to one side of him. The next splintered at the side of the door as its strong bolt went to, and the next instant the light went out, for Eck thought of the little window at one side of the wagon—a mere one-window glass, but plenty large enough to shoot thru. Splintering glass told him that Bill was going to use it, and now, clutching at his own revolver and belt of cartridges, he crawled close to the floor of the wagon and back of the stove.

He had scarcely huddled his body there into as small a compass as he could reduce it before the bullets began to play along the floor and in all parts of the wagon. They hit the little cook stove and the zinc lining that was under and around it to prevent the woodwork from taking fire, but except for their spattering, Eck was safe, and thought: "His ammunition cannot hold out forever"

Presently a new idea trundled into his brain. The bullets were coming in now at longer intervals. One hit the stove pipe a tremendous crack, and down it tumbled. As it fell, Eck uttered a muffled cry, then he began to moan and gasp. Silence outside for a minute, then two extra shots in the direction of the groans, now growing weaker. Eck gave an extra flop; then the moans ceased

Presently, from his vantage ground, peeping about the stove, he saw a match flare up and Bill Doty's face appear at the window-hole. In its light Bill's eyes traversed the confusion, lighting upon a dark bundle on the bunk. The match went out, but Bill was sure that the bundle was the other's body. Eck's long rain coat had fallen across the pillows, and gave the appearance of a huddled form.

Again and again Bill lit matches and peered in, and at any time Eck could have shot into that strained, leering countenance and made himself safe. Such a thought did not enter his mind, however, for he was too well born and trained to kill one for the paltry sum he had stuffed in that belt.

He was waiting for Bill. When the latter was assured that he was dead, then and not until then would he [illegible] to beat in the door, or make it thru that tiny window.

The dogs outside were keeping up an uneasy pacing back and forth. A few shots in their direction had frightened them back to their charges. It was not until Bill tried to beat down the door that Lora made straight for him, catching his right shoulder in her sharp teeth. With a yell of agony, Bill turned and emptied his last shot into her, breaking one foreleg. Lora dropped beside the door, and tho wounded badly, held her position with savage growls.

Bill backed away, concluding that the window was safest to try. He dared not use his last match, but crawled thru the small aperture into the darkness of the wagon. Once safely in, he groped about to find the lamp and lighted it. Then, cautiously, he leaned over the bunk, touching the supposed body, and that second felt a heavy weight hurl itself upon him.

The scuffle was brief. In less than a minute Bill's arms were tightly pinioned with the sheet from Eck's bunk, and next he was bound leg and body with the blankets torn in strips.

"And now that I've got you, Bill Doty," called Eck, not the slightest out of breath, "what do you suppose will be your fate when this attempt gets abroad?"

Bill could only lie and blink at Eck. That he was frightened showed dumbly in his eyes.

"Oh, yes!" said Eck. "You don't give a hoot for the other fellow's suffering or life, but you're mighty afraid to suffer or die yourself! A dirty sneak where his own life is concerned is any murderer! There are men right here who believe lynch law the only law for your kind. I am going to give you over to them."

In reality Eck held no such intention, but all thru Bill's pleadings he let him think this. When Bill promised to reform and lead a good life, Eck merely shook his head, and calmly looked upon the agony the coward could not but plainly show.

Eck guarded him until McDonegal made his rounds. Then, swearing the Scotchman to secrecy, he had him send for the sheriff, insisting as secretly to this man that Bill be tried by the law.

### CHAPTER XIII.

### THE QUEST AGAIN.

THE regular herder for No. 11, finally recovering from his illness, came back to his work, and Eck went back to the ranch-house. Before this word

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had come from Bill. He had broken jail and let out every prisoner with himself. Some of these had been captured, but Bill himself was at large as yet.

"Oddest way he got out," the sheriff informed Charley Pickett. "Made friends with another boy who was in for only a jail sentence. When that boy went out, he slipped back a piece of wire to Bill. Bill attached that to an electric light, and by the heat he generated from the light thru that wire, attached to the stone coping under one window, dislodged the stone, took out the bars, and skipped. Ah! He's a schemer, that son of somebody bad or good—but bad, I guess."

"I'd better let him have gone when he coaxed me to," was Eck's only comment.

It was nearly spring when Grandfather Pickett and his son came home. After some days the grandfather broached the subject Eck longed to talk over with him.

"My memory of twenty years ago, lad," he began, in a deliberate manner, "is growing faint. I remember Douglas Beechmere best of all others that at that time I hired. First, because he was a big, cheery, honest boy; second, because his father besieged me to know where he had gone, and I could not tell, but it was Northwest somewhere.

"He had a close friend, sometimes called Sandow, sometimes Scotty. Sandow, I judge, hated the prairies and the cattle and sheep business—as a tender of these, at least. Once he came near going insane when tending sheep in the Southwest. He took Douglas away from all that kind of work."

Eck started, then hurriedly asked: "Could that one have been named Sandford McFern? He was Scotch. He hated the prairies and sheep tending."

"It comes back to me that that is the name. I have all my books and papers put by of twenty and more years ago. I think the men called him Scotty because he was broadly Scotch, and Sandow, sometimes, because he was strong. He was a powerful man and very dark."

"Then it could not be the Sandford McFern I met." Eck's tone carried a note of disappointment.

Here Charley's father interrupted: "Two names suggest a better hunt than one. It might be well for you to inquire as you go along for the Sandy McFerns. But father is wrong about that man being so very dark. He was large, and his hair and beard might have been black, but I distinctly remember that Scotty had light eyes, very light."

Grandfather could not remember this feature in Scotty, but when he had made a long search thru musty records, to his own satisfaction he upturned the name of the young man who had coaxed Douglas away with him, and the name was Sandford McFern.

And now Eck hopefully wrote his letter to the chance acquaintance he had made bearing this name, wondering if by any possibility he had at the very beginning of his quest run upon a clew to the missing Douglas. The answer gave him strong hope. It read:

"I am not the Sandford McFern of Oxbow ranch. Never heard of it, or a Douglas Beechmere. But tho it is a very common name—you may find it anywhere—I feel sure I have the Sandford McFern located right in this camp, tho not in it at present. They call him Scotty here, but I know that Scotty is not his right name. He is of Scotch birth, one remove, but does not talk the dialect, except in a few odd words. He is a large man, has hair that was once very black, tho now is getting slightly grizzled. His eyes are very light. He has an odd scar in his upper lip, made by falling on glass when a child. He has been in Montana. Was a cowboy. When he gets back, which will not be for some time, I will show him your letter."

"I remember that scar," Grandfather Pickett muttered.

Eck could not wait for that next letter. He must go to see, and that right away, he told the Picketts, who bade him good-by with strongly expressed regret.

The journey eastward thru the Great Lake region, until he came to his jumping-off place, as he termed it, and changed for the narrow-gauge railway that would set him off near the wooded lands owned by the man under whom Sandy McFern toiled, was barren of all adventure for Eck, tho no less did he enjoy the trip. In fact, he was not out hunting adventure. He would rather that it kept its distance. Yet, all the way along, he kept a sharp lookout for any face and form that resembled that owned by Bill Doty. He held an uneasy feeling that somewhere soon he was going to run into Bill.

At a little town named Berne, Eck left the train. For some time he noticed that the railroad had wound near a deep and fair-sized river, out of which ice was beginning to break and tumble and sing as if stirred by great silver ladles. It was merely a burg of a town, and the postoffice combined with a general store was its one imposing place of business. The postmaster told him how to get to the Pierre La Mark sawmill.

He followed the direction by crossing the swollen river, and then followed a wagon road thru a deep forest and half-cleared lands until he came to a great old-fashioned brick house set in a large park which was almost a wilderness of muttering pines. The air was more like the air of home here, and Eck drew in great mouthfuls of it laden with the tang of icy water and leafy mold.

He had met teams coming to the river and railroad with logs and sawed lumber, and others had passed him going back to the mills. The drivers of these all proffered him a seat on the wagon. These lifts he refused until he had passed the big house, which he judged belonged to Pierre La Mark. Then he accepted the last invitation. He wanted to ask a few questions of the driver. The man was not talkative, but he told Eck that Sandy was a head sawyer, and a "tarnal good one, as well as a mighty good man."

Sandy was glad to see the boy, and directed him to the shack where he slept. "Stay with me here as long as you want to," he told him. Then, pointing to a long shack some distance off, he further informed him: "There's where we grab chuck. La Mark has a chain of sawmills up here, and more than as many cooks, Chinese, nigger, Dutch and Irish. When the boys run one out at a boarding-shack, Eaton just transfers him to another boarding-shack, and sends the one at that shack to fill the place of the transferred one. He moves them around that way like pawns. There's Eaton now."

Eck looked up to see a tall, well-set-up man, under 30, giving some order to the engineer. This man was better dressed than the others, and carried himself in easy, even elegant, manner for this place of the woods.

Presently Sandy motioned for the boss to come near, and introduced to him Mr. Alex Lowrey, who might take a job if he could get it. The smile on Eaton's handsome face was genial, and Eck liked him from the start.

"Sure," the boss returned. "Can you handle horses?" He looked over the strong, firm body of the boy. "I know you can without the asking. Come up for a team in the morning."

That night Sandy told Eck about the boss.

"Yes," he began, between puffs at his pipe. "I first met up with Eaton when he was no older than you. He had come up to the pine timber in northern Michigan because he was not strong, and he had been kept at school until he was just about all in, as I could see. But he had to work, and the boss there let him work with me, and I did all I could to make the work easy for him. Why, I got to like the boy so well he will always seem to me like a younger brother.

"He finally began to get some strength and to shoot up into some size, but he always stayed with the timber. After a while he came this way, and I went south along the Mississippi, but we'd write back and forth. Then Frank worked into these La Mark mills."

"Was he the man that wanted you to come here and take his position?" interrupted Eck.

"He sure was, but when I got here some things had suddenly happened. Old La Mark's girl had come home from school, and being lonely up here, what does she pretend to do but to fall in love with the boss."

Eck began to show some extra interest now, seeing which, Sandy proceeded slowly to tell it all.

"You see, La Mark is just common clay. He is what you'd call a lumber king. Got scads of money, but he came from peasant stock in the old country, and his father landed in Canada out of the steerage and not a dollar in his pocket. But he made the start, and old Pierre, his son, piled it on to the sky, with only one dinky little girl to leave it all to. That's Ninette. Pierre kept her in school until last summer, when she demanded to be taken out and brought here.

"But Pierre has his ambition. Some sport with blue blood in him, up at Quebec, borrowed money from Pierre. He finally got in so deep he couldn't get out, being as he had only the prospect of a title, but little or no money with it. Then he saw Ninette, and thought out that way to help him out, old Pierre encouraging his attentions to the girl.

"As far as I know she was willing to marry the title until she came down here. Then it was all off, secretly. I warned Eaton against the girl, but what was the use? Scotty and Eaton were great friends. In fact, Eaton can make anybody like him, tho Scotty hates him now to the bitter end.

"You see, Scotty was the go-between.

(Continued on Page 19.)

Why John Quit Drinking

By John's Wife

I'm the happiest little woman,
In all this little town;
And my merry laugh and singing,
Takes the place of sigh and frown,
For JOHN HAS QUIT HIS DRINKING
And is like himself once more,
And the world is just a paradise
With such happiness in store!

One day I read some verses—
"Mary's Miracle," the name,
And I said, that's John exactly,
And I'll send and get the same.
So I sent for GOLDEN TREATMENT,
(As sly as sly could be)
And I put it in John's supper
And I put it in his tea.

And it didn't taste a little bit;
Had no odor, so, you see—
It was smoothest kind of sailing
For little Doctor Me.
And I watched and prayed and waited,
(And cried some, too, I guess),
And I didn't have the greatest faith,
I'm ashamed now to confess.

And John never thought a minute,
He was being cured of drink,
And soon he's as well as any one,
It makes me cry to think!
Just makes me cry for gladness,
I'm so proud to be his wife—
Since he is cured of drinking,
And leads a nice, new life.

"Since John he quit a-drinking!"
I can't say it times enough!
And hates and loathes a liquor
As he would a poison stuff.
And when I say my prayers at night
As thankful as can be—
I pray for John the most of all—
Then GOLDEN TREATMENT.

Home Treatment For Drunkards

Odorless and Tasteless—Any Lady Can Give It Secretly at Home in Tea, Coffee or Food.

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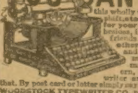

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# FREE TO SUFFERERS OF CATARRH

## I Want Every Catarrh Sufferer to Know How I Cured Myself of Catarrh

Are You Disgusted With Your Lack of Success in relieving Your *Catarrh?* If You Are, Send Me Your Name and I'll Tell You *Absolutely FREE* How I Conquered My Stubborn Case of Catarrh. You Will Thank Me All Your Living Days For This Offer I Am Making You. Don't Wait—Every Day Delays Your Happiness.

## I Was a Sufferer From Catarrh for Many Years, Now I Am a Well Man

The Sufferings, Physical and Mental, That I Endured in Those Years Were *Horrible.* Then I Learned *How to Cure Myself.* I Told My Friends and They Were Cured. *You* Can Conquer *Your Catarrh* The Same Way, and I'll tell You How *Absolutely Free.* I Want Every Catarrh Victim to Write to Me

### UNLIKE ANYTHING YOU EVER HEARD OF BEFORE

**This secret treatment is different from anything you ever heard of before. No salves, lotions, jellies, ointments, pastes, greases, sprays, atomizers, nebulizers; no masks, plasters, bandages, baths; no massage, electricity or vibratory treatments; no smoke to inhale; no surgery; no instruments, appliances or devices; no pain, no operation; none of the old, time-worn methods, but a simple, easy, pleasant, painless, invisible way that heals twenty-four hours a day, no matter where you are or what may be your occupation. A secret worth a fortune to you that I give you absolutely free.**

## I Want to Place in the Hands of Every Catarrh Sufferer FREE the Secret of How I Cured Myself of This Offensive Disease

### I AM THE LIVING PROOF CATARRH IS CURABLE

**Some people say that catarrh cannot be cured. I am a living, healthy proof that it can be cured, for I cured myself and have had no more trouble from this terrible and most objectionable disease.**

**I not only cured myself, but this treatment cured my friends, and have told thousands, who testify that they are cured. I wish you could read with me the letters of gratitude I receive from those who thank me for having rescued them from the horrors of this disease. They are a glorious reward for my efforts to stamp out this loathsome disease. Write to me today and I'll tell you my secret.**

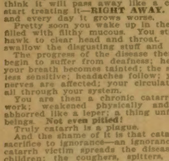
I Have Tried Dozens of Remedies, I Doctored for Years, I Fought to Rid Myself of Catarrh by All Means I Could Find, But Nothing Helped Me. *Has This Been Your Experience?* Then Write to Me AT ONCE.

## Oh! the Joy of Being Freed of This Filthy, Disgusting and Offensive Disease!

One Happy Day I Tried This New Secret Method and in 24 Hours I Felt Relief. I Am Now Absolutely FREE of All Catarrh Trouble. You Can Conquer Your Catarrh As I Have. Let Me Tell You How.

# Conquer Catarrh Before It Conquers You

### Hawking, Spitting, Coughing and Foul Breath Due to Catarrh Are Disgusting to All.



**Catarrh Victims Are Unwelcome**

The catarrh sufferer has my sympathy. He has much to suffer, physically and mentally. I have seen the loved ones of the catarrh sufferer turn away in disgust at his foul breath, his hawking, spitting, coughing, strangling. It creates repulsion. Strangers glare at him and avoid him. Socially he is an outcast—a thing so disgusting that even close friends turn their backs on him. Instead of sympathizing with the victim who is suffering from the effects of this horrible disease, they shun him as they would the plague, for they know that he is a scatterer of disease germs—a danger, a menace to all.

It is bad enough to be a sufferer, but to be avoided, shunned by friends and strangers, adds a mental torture to the physical anguish.

The terrible feature of catarrh is that it starts so mildly. When catarrh first gripes you it is only a trifling thing. You ignore it. It is merely annoying and you think it will pass away like a cold. That is when you should start treating it—**RIGHT AWAY.** But you don't. You neglect it and every day it grows worse.

Pretty soon you wake up in the morning with head and throat filled with filthy mucous. You strangle, you cough and spit and hawk to clear head and throat. Then it begins to spread. You swallow the disgusting stuff and your stomach becomes infected.

The progress of the disease then becomes more marked. You begin to suffer from deafness; head noises manifest themselves; your breath becomes tainted; the senses of smell and taste become less sensitive; headaches follow; your digestion is impaired; your nerves are affected; your circulation becomes bad; the poison is all through your system.

You are then a chronic catarrh victim, unfit to do your life work; weakened physically and mentally; suffering tortures; abhorred like a leper; a thing unfit to associate with your fellow-beings. **Not even pitied!**

Truly catarrh is a plague.

And the shame of it is that catarrh is curable. It is a miserable sacrifice to ignorance—an ignorance that is truly criminal, for the catarrh victim spreads the disease. The mother gives it to her children; the coughers, spitters, sneezers scatter broadcast the infectious germs. They don't mean to, but they do. And every new victim adds new victims. It is an endless chain of horror, clamping mankind in a horrible network of disgusting infection.

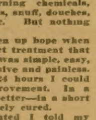
I said ignorance caused it. It is true, for ignorance of this simple secret I hold makes it possible for catarrh to endure.

Why not banish this ignorance. Let me tell you this secret. Let me show you the simple, easy way to banish your catarrh **as I cured mine,** as I have taught thousands to cure their catarrh.

I don't ask you to send me a cent. Just send me your name and I'll tell you all. I'll show you the quick road to recovered health.

Don't waste time and hard-earned money on worthless stuff that won't help you. Let me send you FREE this priceless secret that has already done so much for catarrh sufferers.

### Sam Katz's Own Story



**What I suffered from catarrh only a chronic victim of this plague can understand. I could wish my worst enemy no worse fate.**

**Not only physical suffering but humiliation and mental distress were my lot for years. In that time I tried everything I heard of. I spent a small fortune for remedies, for medical treatments, for so-called cures. I tried salves, jellies, lotions, sprays, atomizers, ointments, masks, massage, electricity, smoking, inhaling the fumes of burning chemicals, vibratory treatments, snuff, douches, appliances, etc., etc. But nothing helped me.**

**I had almost given up hope when I ran across a secret treatment that appealed to me. It was simple, easy, convenient, inexpensive and painless. I tried it and in 24 hours I could notice a real improvement. In a week I was much better—in a short time I was completely cured.**

**I was so delighted I told my friends about it. They tried it and they were cured. I told others, strangers, and they were cured.**

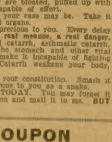
**I will gladly tell you my secret if you are a catarrh sufferer. Don't send me a cent. Just fill out the coupon and I'll tell you how I cured myself.**

**I don't want you to think I am a doctor, or a chemist or a scientist. I am not. I am just a plain business man. I have found that I can help others so I make you this offer.**

**SAM KATZ,** Suite A S 385, 2909 Indiana Ave.
CHICAGO, ILL.

### Catarrh Is a Most Dangerous Disease Affecting Whole Human System

Don't fool yourself with the idea that catarrh is a harmless disease. It isn't. It is a real danger and menace. Ask any doctor about it.



**Horrible Head Noises**

Catarrh in its early stages is not serious, but it is what it develops into that makes it dangerous. Catarrhal asthma, catarrhal deafness, catarrhal bronchitis, catarrh of the stomach, catarrh of the bowels and catarrh of other vital organs are only a few of the serious disorders that develop from it. But it is in the weakening of your system that lies catarrh's greatest danger.

Our body is the battleground of an endless struggle between evil disease germs and our blood. As long as the blood is clean, pure, vigorous, disease germs are fought and conquered. But once it poisons the well-springs of life, then disease germs win an easy victory over us.

That is the great, ever-menacing danger of catarrh—it unfits our body to fight off disease by weakening the powers of resistance. In case of an epidemic a catarrh victim is an easy victim.

Catarrh is a wasting disease. It pervades the digestive organs so that they fail to digest the food we eat and the organs of assimilation so that we fail to get the nutriment from our food. That is why so many catarrh sufferers are weak, pale, thin, or what is equally dangerous, they are bloated, puffed up with stomach gases, flabby of muscle, short-winded, incapable of effort.

Don't neglect your catarrah, no matter how mild your case may be. Take it in time before it has set its claws deep into your vital organs.

Don't put off writing to me. Every day **NOW** is precious to you. Every delay is dangerous, for physicians agree that catarrh is **a real menace, a real danger.** It not only develops into such diseases as bronchial catarrh, asthmatic catarrh, catarrhal deafness, intestinal catarrh, catarrh of the stomach and other vital organs, but it weakens the human system so as to make it incapable of fighting off contagion and infection from other diseases. Catarrh weakens your body, your nerves, your faculties, your mental powers.

You just can't afford to let it go on undermining your constitution. Smash it as you would a poisonous snake, for it is as dangerous to you as a snake.

Do it **NOW,** when it is easiest conquered. Send TODAY. You may forget it tomorrow. All you have to do is to fill out this coupon and mail it to me. **BUT DON'T DELAY.**

**Fill Out This Free ☞ Coupon. Mail It TODAY!**

## FREE COUPON

**SAM KATZ,**
**Suite A S 385, 2909 Indiana Ave., Chicago.**

Please send me FREE the secret of how you cured yourself of Catarrh.

Name ..........................................

Street or R. F. D. ..............................

Postoffice .................... State ........

P. S.: I want you to send me everything you offer free to Catarrh sufferers.

# Eck Lowrey's Luck.

(Continued From Page 17.)

He carried letters from Ninette to Eaton, then back again. Scotty was bound to get Eaton married to Pierre's money. It was Scotty who brought the cab for them to elope in. It was Scotty who stood guard in that old wilderness about the house until she could get away, and Scotty who paid for it all.

"At the last minute Ninette would not go without money, so she slips in the room where her father sleeps, nabs a roll of bills from his desk, makes a noise of some kind she did not mean to, and wakens her gusty old dad. He is sure it is a man, and yelling to his servants, pursues the thief.

"Ninette's afraid of her father, really. She runs like a killdeer, but weakens. When she passes Scotty she sticks the roll of bills in his hands. It being dark, he can't exactly guess just what it is. By the time she comes up to Eaton and the carriage, Ninette is scared out of her senses. She whispers for him to drive off quick. Her father will pursue and kill both of them. With this she leaves Eaton, and scuds by another way to the house and up to her room, and when they come back with Scotty, still holding to the money, she is in bed and pretendin' to be sound asleep, knowing nothing of it all.

"And neither does Scotty know she's there. He thinks she is gone with Eaton, and he's faithful. Scotty never tells how he comes by the money. He wants Eaton and Ninette to get clear away before he tells. So he lets them take him to Berne and lock him in the calaboose all night, and he just laughs in their faces.

"Next morning he tells his story, and they give him back the lie. Ninette, they said, never left her bed that night, and Eaton was at his work early that morning. 'That's a thin story,' says Pierre. 'His daughter, engaged to an earl or lord—or something, I forget what—to run off with anything like Eaton. Preposterous!'

"The worst of it is, Ninette got hold of Eaton that morning, and tried to force him to let Scotty bear the blame for taking the money. Eaton refuses to do this, but he delays so long going to add his testimony to Scotty's that Scotty has finally freed himself in a way. Pierre got scared about Scotty going to the titled son-in-law in expectation, and telling him this story, so he withdraws the charge, and Scotty comes free—and mad—say, Scotty has a queer temper! How he hates the boss! It makes no matter to him that Eaton comes after it's all over and tells old Pierre a straight story of all he knows about the matter, and tells him he'll have his daughter yet if he can get her [illegible] and Pierre nearly falls dead at that. Scotty is a useful man to Ninette's father, and he cannot well give him up, for he's been with him so long; and as for Eaton—well, there will be an excuse yet framed up to get rid of Eaton. Pierre has been after me to step into his shoes at a better salary, but I'll never take Eaton's berth until he vacates it of his own wish and will. I think he is going to, some of these near days, for I guess Pierre has got that flighty daughter of his under his thumb at last, and the duke, or lord, or earl, or whatever he is, will soon come to marry her."

"I've an idea," breathed Eck, seeing that Sandy was done, "that if I had been here it would have been me instead of Scotty that got in that scrape, and I'd not got out of it so easy, either. I feel sorry for the boss."

"I don't know whether I do or not," puffed Sandy. "Think of marryin' a girl that wanted you to let your good friend go to jail for her. No, no! That isn't my kind!"

This capital story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months **many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00,** and **you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.**

* * *

# Down With His Ship.

(Continued From Page 15.)

two years I've lived in San Francisco, and I heard you was outfitting to come in the Shooting Light. The White Creeper was secretly lying along the coast in a safe harbor, and I told Bragon. He was scared to guess that you intended to look for the wreck of the Brave, for you would learn she never was wrecked. He made me sign the articles with you for this voyage, and he followed after in his ship. That's all I know about it. I say I've done nothing wrong. It ain't no' crime to enter as a sailor in your crew."

"So it was you who sent the pirate ship after us?"

"Why, as to that, I only told Bragon what you was about to do."

"And he tagged after us. Well, his movements are clear now. Waited to see whether we would discover that the Brave was not in the sea, eh? After that he would likely have butchered us. Oh! you are party to nothing but innocence, Soper!"

"See here," spoke the man, lowering his voice, "if you rub it in too hard on me I'll tell the skipper just who you are, mate."

Roger broke into a hearty laugh and turned to Hardy.

"Captain," he said cheerfully, "confessions seem to be in order. Listen to mine! I am not named Roger Cooper, but Roger Wallace, and I'm a son of one of the Wallace Brothers who owned the Riding Brave."

"Bless me!" Hardy exclaimed.

"Like Soper, the fact that you were to sail in the Shooting Light became known to Wallace Brothers. They always had full faith in you, but they wanted to know what you had afoot. No man living is to be trusted blindfold, sir, so you needn't feel hurt. Well, altho I am a minor member of the firm of Wallace Brothers, I am also a sailor and a diver. My uncle worked matters so that when you wanted a diver you got me. I've come along with you under [illegible], as I may say, but I learned to know and admire you. Sir, I'm truly your friend. May I take your hand."

Hardy thrust out his heavy hand and gave a clasp that made the young man wince.

"One of the Wallaces!" he cried. "Bless my soul!"

"One of them, sir, and a guarantee of what they will say when you tell them your full story. They will give you a clean bill of health, captain, for you are not to be blamed for what happened to the Brave."

"By Jupiter! A Wallace!"

"A while ago you expressed a wish that we had Wallace brains in this ship. Remember? Well, I won't answer for the kind of brains I bring into the game, but a Wallace body is here."

Soper, previously certain that he could safely rely upon his knowledge of Roger's identity to pull him out of trouble, was sneakng away. That hand-clasp had shown him that his hopes were based on sand. The diver called after him sharply.

"Back here!" was his order. "Tell us about that bag of soft stuff, filled with down, that Bragon flung to you on this ship as he slid past in the White Creeper."

"He didn't fling no such bag," growled the man.

"We have it now. Confess! A letter was in it. Speak out!"

"Oh, hang it all, have your own way!" snarled Soper. "Something was flung to me as you say, but it was not the bag. 'Twas only a wrapper of paper, with the note inside. The bag I brought from 'Frisco. If I had need to notify Bragon of anything by day, when he was following just astern, I was first to signal him and then drop the bag overboard for him to pick up. Duly sealed with pitch it would be waterproof, and it was buoyant enough to float."

"Bragon's note mentioned powder aboard of us. Where is it?"

"There is none. He bought some and I was to stow it here, with a fuse to use when the time came, but I'm afraid of powder. I left it behind in 'Frisco. Blame me for a fool! I should have burned his note, but I put it in my own bag, and then, being almost detected handling it, flung it behind somebody's chest in the fok'sle. When I went to look for it 'twas gone. I've been a fool!"

"Get back to your quarters!" Hardy said curtly.

(Concluded Next Week.)

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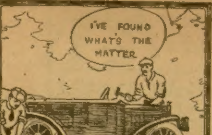
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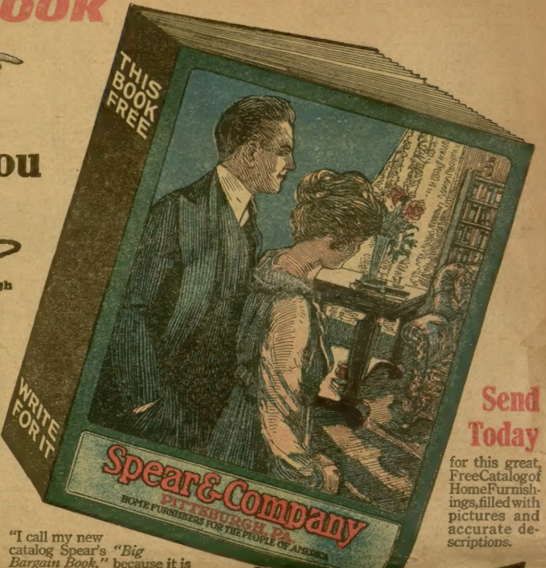

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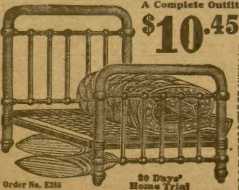

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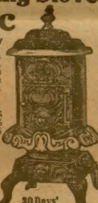

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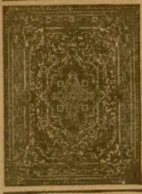

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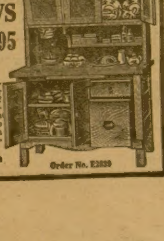

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